

# KP prepares plan for promotion of tourism in upcoming season

From Our Staff Correspondent

**PESHAWAR:** Integrated Tourism Contingency Plan has been prepared to put in place necessary arrangements for the possible opening of tourist activities during the upcoming season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Under the Contingency Plan, Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) have been drafted for the industry in the COVID era which will soon be notified after approval of a joint committee of Health, Tourism, Relief and Planning Departments.

It was told in a meeting held here on Wednesday to review preparations for the upcoming tourism season with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the chair.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing about the progress on the establishment of Integrated Tourist Zones (ITZs) in the province and other development schemes initiated for the promotion of tourism with special focus on the projects related to road infrastructures in the

touristic spots of the province. Besides, Secretary Tourism, Secretary Communication and Works, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister and Managing Director Tourism, other relevant high ups attended the meeting.

The meeting was informed that under the Contingency Plan tenders have been floated for the establishment of Tourist Facilitation Hub, Portable Toilets and Rest Areas whereas all the relevant departments, Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners have been taken on-board to implement the Contingency Plan. Regarding the progress on road infrastructure projects in the touristic sites it was updated that under the World Bank assisted KITE Project, Feasibility Study, detailed Engineering design and Construction Supervision of 24-Kilometer Thandiani Road expansion, 23-Kilometer Mankyal to Badha Setirai Road, 45-Kilometer Shishikoh to Madaklasht Road and 35-Kilometer Supat Valley Road has been finalized. Similarly, five

different roads with a total length of 60-Kilometer and nine different roads in Malakand division with a total length of 50 Kilometer in Hazara Division have been included in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) of the provincial government. The meeting was further informed that four different sites had been identified for the establishment of Integrated Tourist Zone in the province which includes Ganool in Mansehra, Mankyal in Swat, Madaklasht in Chitral and Thandiani in Abbottabad. It was added that six more sites had been identified in Hazara and Malakand Division for ITZs under the CPEC Project. The Chief Minister termed the promotion of tourism as one of the top priorities of his government and said that result-oriented steps are being taken under a well devised and Integrated Plan for the purpose. He directed the concerned authorities to ensure timely completion of all the projects launched for the uplift of tourism sector in the province.



ISLAMABAD: Cars pass through the rain water with splash.

## 239,987 deserving Balochistan families provided free ration

**ISLAMABAD:** Balochistan Minister for Social Welfare and Non- Formal Education Asad Ullah Baloch Wednesday said that as many as 239,987 families have benefited from the free 'ration' distributed across Balochistan among the affectees of COVID-19 lockdown.

On the direction of Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Ration were being distributed mostly among jobless working class and deserving people.

The district administration has distributed ration among 168,819 families. Non-governmental organizations had distributed ration among 42, 238 families, while 24,493 families were benefited from rations by the members of the National and Provincial Assemblies, 2,859 families from the federal government and 1,578 families were beneficiaries of the ration distributed by Pakistan Army and Navy.

He said that Rs 4 billion has been allocated for distribution of ration among the deserving people while Rs. 4 billion has been allocated for cash distribution. The relief initiative was aimed at providing ration to daily wagers and needy people at their doorstep while having a joint working group without duplication," he said, adding that daily wagers and poor people would have to be provided free ration.

The government has taken steps to reach each and every needy family so, that nobody could go to sleep hungry," he said. He said that the COVID-19 pan-

demical has upended the lives of the poor people of Balochistan in many ways. Following the lockdown, trade activities have come to a halt, casting a large population into penury, he said adding that in Balochistan only 250,000 people having government jobs, the rest depend directly or indirectly on cross border-trade.

"Balochistan province, with its 75 percent of sea shore, makes up around 50 percent of the land mass of the country, while its population remains only 12.30 million. Its scattered population, poor means of communication, fragile and limited health facilities have further aggravated the situation," he added.

Baloch said that around 71 percent of population lives below the poverty line in Balochistan.

The only ray of hope for the masses is government sector to ease their hardships and sufferings.

The province of Balochistan deserves a trickle down of such resources to stem the tide of increasing joblessness and save the people from falling into the abyss of abject poverty, Asad added.

He said every one must come forward at this moment of trial to support the people who are suffering due to a halt in the economic activities."

The minister said, "The nation needs unity to overcome the corona pandemic. I appreciate the role of doctors, media, lawyers and welfare organizations in the battle against the COVID-19".

The provincial government has still distributing additional ration to poor families in the city, who are

### CTP takes strict action against 178 one-wheelers

**RAWALPINDI:** City Traffic Police (CTP) is taking strict action against one-wheelers and special drive already being run to curb the activity has been intensified as the CTP managed to net 178 one-wheelers during Ramazan ul Mubarak. According to Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Syed Ali Akbar, the activity was already being checked by 20 special squads of traffic officials deputed on the city roads but now, several other arrangements had also been made to curb the activity.

He informed that city traffic police was taking stern action against the one-wheelers and the city roads especially the attractive areas for the activity were being covered. He said traffic police officers had been directed to keep a vigilant eye on the one-wheelers so that action in accordance with the law could be taken against them. Under special arrangements, traffic officials had been deployed at Ayub Park, Murree Road near Underpass, Rawal Road, Sixth Road, Stadium Road and other places. —APP

### Registration of over 33000 Tiger Force volunteers completed

**MULTAN:** Registration of over 33, 000 Tiger force volunteers has been completed in the district and inaugural ceremony of Tiger force was held here at Raza Hall on Thursday. Speaking on this occasion, Provincial Minister for Energy Dr Akhtar Malik said that India and United Kingdom were following the Prime Minister Imran Khan's strategy regarding combating COVID-19. He said that the prime minister had announced biggest masses relief package of the country's history. Dr Akhtar Malik said that the incumbent government had not made Ehsaas Cash Program source of own advertisement like previous governments. He said that uplift projects were being executed in larger interest of masses in Punjab. He said that work was in progress for construction of nine big hospitals across the province. He said that Tiger Force volunteers would provide leading squad of the government. He hailed DC Aamer Khattak over better arrangements at quarantine centre, District Convener Tiger Force and Deputy Commissioner Aamer Khattak said that Tiger Force volunteers would be included in various committees. —APP

## 'Major' mental health crisis looming from pandemic: UN



**NEW YORK:** The coronavirus outbreak risks sparking a major global mental health crisis, the United Nations warned Thursday, calling for urgent action to address the psychological suffering brought on by the pandemic.

While protecting physical health has been the main concern during the first months of the crisis, it is also placing huge mental strains on large swathes of the global population, the UN said in policy brief. "After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned in a video message launching the brief. "Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities," he said.

The UN brief highlighted the mental strains on people fearing that they or loved ones will be infected or die from the novel coronavirus, which has killed nearly 300,000 people worldwide since

it first emerged in China late last year. It also pointed to the psychological impact on vast numbers of people who have lost or are at risk of losing their livelihoods, have been separated from loved ones or have suffered under drastic lockdown orders.

"Tremendous stress" "We know that the current situations, the fear and uncertainty, the economic turmoil -- they all cause or could cause psychological distress," Devora Kestel, head of the World Health Organization's mental health and substance use department, told a virtual briefing. Health care workers and first responders -- operating under "tremendous stress" -- are particularly vulnerable, Kestel said, pointing to news reports indicating rises in suicides among medical workers. A whole host of other groups also face particular psychological challenges brought on by the crisis. Children being kept out of school, for instance, face uncertainty and anxiety.

Along with women, they also face a heightened risk of domestic abuse as

people spend lengthy amounts of time cooped up at home. The elderly and people with pre-existing conditions, who are considered particularly at risk from the virus, meanwhile face increased stress over the threat of infection. And people with pre-existing psychological issues could see them exacerbated, while accessing their usual treatment and face-to-face therapy may no longer be possible. Thursday's policy brief pointed to a range of national studies indicating that mental distress is mounting rapidly. One study conducted in the Amhara region of Ethiopia showed that 33 percent of the population were suffering from depression-linked symptoms -- "a three-fold increase" from before the pandemic. Other studies indicated that mental distress prevalence amid the crisis was as high as 60 percent in Iran and 45 percent in the United States, Kestel said. She also pointed to a Canadian study showing nearly half of health care workers said they needed psychological support. —AFP

## World leaders insist COVID-19 vaccine be free for all

**GENEVA:** World leaders past and present on Thursday demanded that the eventual COVID-19 vaccine should be made available to everyone across the globe, free of cost.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan were among more than 140 signatories of a letter saying any vaccine should not be patented while the science should be shared between nations.

The World Health Assembly, the policy-setting body of the UN's World Health Organisation, holds its annual general meeting next week.

The signatories called on the WHO to rally behind the cause.

"Governments and international partners must unite around a global guarantee which ensures that, when a safe and ef-

fective vaccine is developed, it is produced rapidly at scale and made available for all people, in all countries, free of charge," the letter said. "The same applies for all treatments, diagnostics, and other technologies for COVID-19." The letter was signed by Senegalese President Macky Sall and Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo.

Former presidents and prime ministers among the signatories included Shaikat Aziz, Jan Peter Balkenende, Jose Manuel Barroso, Gordon Brown, Helen Clark, Felipe Gonzalez, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Aleksander Kwasniewski, Mary McAleese, Olusegun Obasanjo and Juan Manuel Santos. The letter comes amid fury in France after pharmaceutical giant Sanofi said it would reserve first shipments of any COVID-19 vaccine for the

United States. The French multinational's chief executive Paul Hudson said the United States would get first dibs because its government was helping to fund the vaccine research. His comments drew outrage Thursday from officials and health experts. The letter ahead of the WHO said it was not the time to leave the task of resolving the pandemic to market forces or let the interests of wealthy companies and governments come before the need to save lives. African Union Chairperson Ramaphosa said: "As the countries of Africa, we are resolute that the COVID-19 vaccine must be patent-free, rapidly made and distributed, and free for all. "No-body should be pushed to the back of the vaccine queue because of where they live or what they earn." —AFP

### NZ boosts budget spending amid COVID-19 downturn

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand announced a NZ\$50 billion (US\$30 billion) war chest on Thursday to help cushion the impact of the coronavirus pandemic that has stalled the economy and already cost thousands of jobs. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund is the centrepiece of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's annual budget, aiming to stimulate recovery with spending on infrastructure and business support.

The South Pacific nation has contained the virus by closing its borders and imposing a seven-week lockdown that ended on Thursday, but Ardern said there were still tough times ahead.

"Global predictions are dire. Unemployment will rise, and growth will slow dramatically," she said. "We know as a trading nation that will have an impact, and it will be significant and it will be painful." About NZ\$30 billion from the fund has already been allocated, with NZ\$20 billion kept in reserve for projects over the next four years. Even with the stimulus, the Treasury predicts unemployment will reach at least 8.3 per cent next year and the economy will contract 4.6 per cent. But the recession, which Ardern said would be "sudden and deep" is expected to ease by 2022, when growth is forecast to bounce back to 8.6 per cent. The massive spending means government debt will peak at 53.6 per cent of GDP in 2023, more than double the Ardern administration's pre-virus ceiling of 25 per cent. Ardern, who faces an election in September, said she wanted to use the money to fix long-term problems, as well as boost the economy.

"We have long faced a housing crisis, our environment has been suffering, inequality and child poverty have all been issues we've had to tackle," the centre-left leader said, raising issues that she campaigned on before winning the 2017 election. "In three years' time, I want to look back and say that COVID was not the point those issues got worse, but the chance we had to make them better." —AFP

### CORRECTION OF FATHER'S NAME



My name is Maaz Tabish, I passed my BISE Sahiwal Annual Examination 2017, under Roll No 128621. My father's correct name is Arshad Qaiser, whereas it was published mistakenly as Mohammad Arshad, which is incorrect. Therefore correct it as Arshad Qaiser from Mohammad Arshad. If anybody, agency or department has any objection, he should inform Under Secretary BISE Sahiwal within 15 days. Maaz Tabish S/o Mohammad Arshad Qaiser 191 Pine Valley, Pakpat-

## Meghan Markle's friend reveals the Duchess of Sussex learned Farsi to impress him



**LONDON:** Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle learned Persian to impress Shahs of Sunset's Nema Vand. According to People, The Bravo reality TV star discussed his high school friendship with Meghan on the latest episode of the Reality Life with Kate Casey podcast. "I grew up with her. We were friends for a long time," he was quoted as saying. He claimed that Meghan once learned words in the Persian language Farsi to catch his eye. "She knew what she was doing. She toyed with our hearts masterfully," he added.

He recalled: "We were at a party one time and she sat on my lap. She got nose-to-nose with me. For a 16-year-old guy, that is an emotional moment. She said to me in Farsi, 'You are so beautiful.' I asked her, 'How do you know Farsi?' She said, 'I learned it for you.' Then she walked away." Vand said Meghan was a "woman among girls". —Agencies



### 'Belgium is worse on COVID-19 deaths per million'

**LONDON:** The United Kingdom is on a similar level to France, Italy and Spain on COVID-19 deaths per million but Belgium is worse, a junior British health minister said on Thursday. —AFP