

### **Panic buying witnessed in Karachi**

KARACHI: Buying panic witnessed at grocery stores and retail outlets across the city in the backdrop of reported closure of markets due to sharp increases in the number of Covid-19 cases in the province.

The fear has gripped citizens following rumors about the possible lockdown of city circulated on social media since last Sunday.

Unusual customer rush was seen inside supermarkets, and shops on Tuesday as well. People continue flooding markets to buy household items including flour, cooking oil, sugar, rice etc in large quantities, anticipating that markets would remain closed for a longer period.

One of the biggest supermarkets in the city was closed at noon due to overcrowded situation, and management was forced to stop general public entering the supermarket.

“Due to panic spread over social and conventional media regarding coronavirus threat in the city, I was directed by my mother for buying excess grocery in case of lockdown situation. I went to Karachi’s biggest superstore, but I could not even enter in the store because the mart was thronged by panic buyers. I had to leave the store empty handed. This mess-like situation what I observed at the store sent shivering down my spine,” said Ali Safdar, a resident of Azizabad.

The panic was obvious as Sindh government took a drastic decision on Tuesday evening, under which all the restaurants, shopping malls, food streets, and parks would remain closed for the next 15 days across the province. The government has already closed all educational institutions and marriage halls across the province.

As per the decision, grocery, fish, chicken, milk, vegetable shops etc will remain open and restaurants would be allowed to offer home delivery services.

“We are purchasing grocery for a month as we have come to know the government is imposing a lockdown. We don’t know what will happen in the days to come,” said Saadat, a resident of Malir, who was waiting in a long queue outside a wholesale shop in Marlr-15, for his turn.

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has also suspended all Bachat bazaars within its jurisdictions as preventive measure.

Traffic on the city’s main arteries including Sharah-e-Faisal remained thin as people have limited their outdoor activities to protect themselves from the global pandemic. Reports suggest that coronavirus has started spreading through social contacts in the city and other areas of the province.

Pharmacies are running short of protective face masks and hand sanitizers, amid heavy demand. Citizens complained that they have to purchase face masks and hand sanitizers at exorbitant price, urging the authorities concerned to take punitive measures against such profiteers.

However, the provincial authorities asked people not to panic and remain calm, saying that the situation is under control.