

ALASKANS LIVE AMONG BEARS BOTH REAL AND BRIGHTLY COLORED

ANCHORAGE: Alaska's largest city is home to more than 300 grizzly and black bears - and now more than a dozen multicolored ones. Life-size statues painted by city artists for a public art installation called "Bears on Parade" are popping up as part of an effort to raise awareness that if you live in Anchorage, you live near bears. "The whole point of this was to engage in conversation about bears and their habitat - the food that they eat, where they live," said Brenda Carlson, a tourism official who helped organize the program.

The city spans 1,958 square miles, but people occupy only about 204 square miles, according to

the state Department of Fish and Game. The rest of Anchorage includes national forest, a state wildlife refuge, 55 to 65 grizzlies and 250 to 350 black bears. Bears can be deadly if they are surprised. To minimize maulings, the department's Anchorage Bear Committee, which is dedicated to local bear conservation, tries to educate people about how to live alongside the animals. "Not all bears eat salmon," said Carlson, also a committee member. "Some eat berries, depending on where they are. We really wanted it to spark conversation about the bears."

The panel wanted to coordinate the installation

of statues with a summer conference of 700 international bear scientists brought to Anchorage by the International Association for Bear Research & Management. Carlson reached out to America's Fiberglass Animals of Seward, Nebraska, which has helped create more than 300 public art projects with fiberglass sculptures. Fifteen bears arrived by flatbed truck looking like polar bears - completely white. Sponsors paid either \$1,750 or \$3,000 for bears. So far, 13 have been painted, sealed and erected. Artists received loose instructions. The adornment had to be family-friendly and reflect the beauty of Alaska, Carlson said.

One bear has a birch forest painted on its side, while others are painted with rivers, wildflowers or the northern lights. A bear sponsored by an ice cream shop has a tongue that appears to be licking ice cream off its face. "I love that tongue," Carlson said, and it could fit into the theme of what a bear should not eat - human food. "Make sure your trash is put away, because that trash bear will be a problem," she said. The statues arrived too late for the early summer bear conference, but some scientists will benefit. The committee is donating nearly \$8,000 from statue sponsorships to the next conference to cover scientists' expenses. — AP



SINGAPORE: A National Environmental Agency (NEA) scatters mosquito pellets in a drainage around the Aljunied neighborhood in Singapore yesterday. Singapore on August 29 confirmed more Zika infections, bringing the total number of cases past 50 as mosquito-fighting teams saturated the scene of the outbreak amid growing public alarm. — AFP

PREGNANT WOMEN URGED TO AVOID SINGAPORE AMID ZIKA

AUSTRALIA, TAIWAN AND SOUTH KOREA ISSUE TRAVEL WARNINGS

SINGAPORE: Australia, Taiwan and South Korea advised pregnant women and those attempting to get pregnant to avoid travel to Singapore after an outbreak of the Zika virus infected more than 50 people in the city-state. The outbreak and the warnings come as a potential blow to tourism in one of the world's busiest travel hubs, which is already struggling to recover from a slump amid tepid global growth.

Singapore reported its first case of locally-transmitted Zika at the weekend, and the number of reported infections of the mosquito-borne virus has since jumped to 56. At least three dozen of those have since made a full recovery. The Zika virus was detected in Brazil last year and has since spread across the Americas. It poses a risk to pregnant women because it can cause severe birth defects. It has been linked in Brazil to more than 1,800 cases of microcephaly, a rare birth defect where babies are born with abnormally small heads and brains.

The 56 confirmed cases in Singapore include only one woman. Taiwan, Australia and South Korea advised pregnant women and those planning pregnancy to postpone trips to Singapore. Those returning from the country should avoid

pregnancy for two months. South Korean travelers will receive text messages with the warning when they arrive in Singapore. Malaysia and Indonesia, Singapore's closest neighbors, have stepped up protective measures following the outbreak, introducing thermal scanners at airports and border checkpoints.

Singapore's Tourism Board said it was monitoring developments, adding the city state remained a "safe travel destination", and it was premature to consider any impact. More than 55 million people pass through Singapore's Changi airport every year. In the first half of this year, tourism arrivals reached almost 8.2 million, compared with around 7.3 million in the same period of last year. Online retailer Lazada Singapore said yesterday it has seen sales of mosquito repellent and other deterrent products rise fivefold over the past three days compared to a week ago.

Foreign workers

Authorities continued to inspect thousands of homes in seven parts of Singapore, including five foreign worker dormitories, on Tuesday. Officials sprayed insecticide and removed potential mosquito breeding habitats such as stagnant water

and moist dirt from drains. The majority of those infected with Zika in Singapore were foreign workers, but the government has not disclosed their nationalities. The High Commission of Bangladesh, which represents the largest community of foreign workers, said none of the workers were Bangladeshis. The Chinese and Myanmar embassies in Singapore said they had not been notified by Singapore whether their citizens were among those infected. The Thai embassy did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Foreign workers in Singapore, employed mostly in the construction and marine industries, can earn as little as \$52 (\$1.47) an hour, often work 12-14 hours a day and take few days off. They are unlikely to travel often. The GuocoLand construction site, where the infected workers were found, remained closed on Tuesday morning, according to a Reuters photographer at the scene. It was ordered on Sunday to halt work and rectify the conditions that allowed mosquitoes to breed. Regional health experts said the Zika virus is likely to be significantly under-reported across tropical Southeast Asia as local health authorities fail to conduct adequate screening. — Reuters

VECTURA'S THERAPY MISSES THE PRIMARY GOAL IN TRIAL

LONDON: Drugmaker Vectura Group Plc said its asthma therapy Flutiform had not met the primary endpoint in a late-stage trial to determine its ability to treat COPD, a type of lung disease, sending the British firm's stock to its lowest in 21 months. Flutiform had not significantly reduced the yearly rate of worsening conditions in patients with moderate and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), versus mono-component LABA treatment, respiratory drug specialist Vectura said on Tuesday.

Vectura said its European license partner Mundipharma, which carried out the study, had indicated that these phase III result would prevent it from making a regulatory filing for COPD indication in Europe. "Whilst several previous ICS/LABA studies have also failed to show a similar

benefit, the news is clearly disappointing since it means Flutiform will remain limited to promotion for use in asthma," Stifel analysts wrote in a note.

With asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) affecting about 500 million people worldwide, the opportunity in the sector is considered massive, Goldman Sachs analysts estimated in a report last year. Vectura agreed to buy rival SkyePharma in March for 441 million pounds, in a tie-up to create a lung disease group with expertise across different inhaler technologies. The final-stage COPD trial involved 1,767 randomly picked patients in 16 countries, where neither the patients nor the administrator know the critical aspects of the experiment, guarding against both experimenter bias and placebo effects. — Reuters

SPACE X DRAGON RETURNS TO EARTH WITH STATION SCIENCE

CAPE CANAVERAL: A SpaceX Dragon capsule returned to Earth on Friday with scientific gifts from the International Space Station. NASA astronaut Kate Rubins waved goodbye as the Dragon slowly flew away Friday morning. Six hours later, the spacecraft parachuted into the Pacific, just off Mexico's Baja California coast. It's loaded with 3,000 pounds of research and equipment, including 12 mice that flew up on the Dragon as part of a genetic study. "Good splashdown of Dragon confirmed," SpaceX reported via Twitter. Rubins and Japanese astronaut Takuya Onishi used the big robot arm to release the capsule. Mission Control thanked the astronauts for their effort, then added, "To the Dragon recovery team, fair

winds and following seas."

The Dragon delivered a new docking port last month that will be used in another year or two by SpaceX and Boeing, which are developing crew capsules for NASA. Its shuttles five years retired, the space agency has turned over orbital deliveries of both cargo and astronauts to private companies, in order to focus on Mars exploration. In the meantime, NASA astronauts ride in Russian capsules to the space station. SpaceX is the only space station shipper capable of returning items for analysis back to Earth; that's why the Dragon is so important to NASA. Everyone else's cargo ships are filled with trash at mission's end and burn up on re-entry. — AP



NASA Administrator Charles Bolden (second right) and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk (right) look at the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft at the SpaceX Rocket Development Facility in McGregor, Texas. — AP

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