



In this file photo, workers unload a Finnair cargo plane at the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport in Vantaa, Finland after arriving from China carrying medical equipment for the coronavirus. (AP)

Finnair wants to resume flights in July, focus on Asia

Finland's national airline, a major carrier between Europe and China, said Monday it will add more flights and routes beginning in July if governments ease their lockdowns enough for travel to resume.

The outlook for flying overall, however, remains uncertain, with companies forecasting a slow recovery even next year due to public health restrictions and concerns.

Finnair, which had been forced to temporarily cancel flights to mainland China and other Asian destinations because of the coronavirus, said it will restart in phases, "with a strong focus on Asia, which is strategically important" for the state-controlled airline.

The Helsinki-based company said it will fly to Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, adding it was pending gov-

ernment approval, but also to Nagoya, Osaka and Tokyo Narita in Japan; and to Singapore, Seoul and Bangkok. "We expect aviation to recover gradually, starting in July", Finnair Chief Commercial Officer Ole Orver said in a statement. "Our intention is to operate approximately 30% of our normal amount of flights in July, and we will also start long-haul flights to

our key Asian destinations. We will then add routes and frequencies month by month as demand recovers." In July, Finnair would also resume flying to several major cities in Europe, including Berlin, Brussels, Geneva, London, Moscow, Munich, and Paris, as well as six domestic routes. Destinations in Spain, Italy and Poland would be added in August. (AP)

Commerce, IT and Consumer Goods among most appealing industries – Bayt.com & YouGov

Almost 7 in 10 Kuwait residents prefer to be self-employed

KUWAIT CITY, May 19: The Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa survey, conducted recently by Bayt.com, the Middle East's #1 job site, and YouGov, global online market research company, has found that almost 7 in 10 (68%) of Kuwait residents prefer to be self-employed/have their own business if given the choice.



Ola Haddad

The survey found that even among those who are employed, 65% are currently thinking of starting a business, 23% of respondents have tried to start their own business in the past, while 8% never thought of starting their own business.

When it comes to being self-employed, personal fulfillment (53%), higher monetary gains (46%) and being my own boss (43%) emerge as the top reasons for preferring to be self-employed. This is followed by freedom to choose work-life balance (32%) and ability to give back to the community (32%).

Those who have already started their business seem to have similar reasoning. When asked about the reasons MENA professionals have for starting their own business, the top three answers were: more income (36%), better work-life balance (35%) and independence in what I want to achieve (31%).

Of those who prefer to seek employment in a company in Kuwait, the main reasons for their preference are: regular income (52%), learning new skills (33%) and job security (24%).

"Understanding the views of entrepreneurs in the region is essential

to maximizing impact and driving growth and innovation in the economy," said Ola Haddad, Director of Human Resources at Bayt.com. "As part of our research strategy, Bayt.com conducts surveys annually and shares interesting insights about the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship for the benefit of the sector."

Kuwait Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Entrepreneurship continues to be a growing trend in Kuwait. Despite the given challenges of setting up a business, the survey indicates that entrepreneurship has become more popular than ever before. Many entrepreneurs are looking to grow their startups and establish business. Over a third (36%) of MENA respondents have personal ambitions to grow their business further in their country of residence, followed by 23% who aim to become an important international player.

Of those who are self-employed

Saudi BICRA trends remain stable despite oil price drop

RIYADH, May 19: Following a recent review of the Banking Industry Country Risk Assessment (BICRA) for Saudi Arabia, S&P Global Ratings has confirmed the group classification for the Saudi Arabia BICRA remains unchanged at '4', and the economic risk and industry risk scores remain unchanged at '5' and '3', respectively. In addition, we continue to see stable trends for both economic risk and industry risk. No ratings were affected by this review.

Of the factors contributing to our assessment of industry risk, we have revised downward our assessment of the institutional framework to intermediate risk from low risk. We now view Saudi Arabia's regulatory framework as comparable with that of peers, having previously considered

in the MENA region, 36% are at the start up stage of the business, while 26% state that their business is established but not performing well. On the other hand, 16% say their business is well established and performing well.

The top concern of Kuwait respondents while setting up their own business would be procuring finances to start (64%) and the uncertainty of profit/income (39%).

Among the most appealing industries for entrepreneurship in Kuwait are Commerce/Trade/Retail (17%), IT/ Internet/ E-commerce (15%), and Consumer Goods/ FMCG (6%).

Perception of Entrepreneurship

more conservative in terms of limiting risk appetite in the sector. Over the past few years, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) has relaxed capital requirements for mortgage lending and increased the loan to value ratio in order to help more nationals become homeowners, which is a Vision 2030 objective. These changes have led to a significant increase in mortgage lending, a trend that we expect will continue over the next couple of years.

Under our base-case scenario, we expect Saudi banks' cost of risk will increase, reaching an average of 1.2% - 1.4% in 2020 - 2021, up from 0.8% in 2019. This is because we anticipate an economic recession in 2020 due to a lower oil price and COVID-19-related restrictions. At the same

The survey shows even greater benefits of entrepreneurship for societies and the economy. The perceived image of entrepreneurs in the region is very positive – Kuwait respondents perceive entrepreneurs to be opportunity-driven (81%) and that they help in creating new jobs (83%).

The best pieces of advice offered to budding entrepreneurs by respondents in the MENA region is to not be afraid of failure (44%) and doing an extensive amount of market research (12%). Over a quarter (28%) of respondents believe that innovation is the key to success as an entrepreneur, followed by access to funding (23%) and employing the

right people (21%). Zafar Shah, Research Director, Data Services at YouGov said: "Entrepreneurs are the primary source of new job creation. The ideas and innovations born in small companies and startups disrupt industries and create a stronger economy, offering greater opportunities for upward mobility. Therefore, it became imperative for us to explore upcoming entrepreneurs and what challenges they face in a new survey with Bayt.com."

As part of its ongoing commitment to empower entrepreneurs and startups across the region with the tools and information to source, hire, and manage talent,

Bayt.com introduced free job postings to push more work opportunities. Entrepreneurs can post their jobs for free and access the largest and most comprehensive database in the Middle East of over 38 million CVs by clicking on this link: <https://bit.ly/2WNaLem>.

Data for the Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Survey was collected online from January 29, 2020 to February 26, 2020. Results are based on a sample of 1,818 respondents from the following countries: UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan and others.

Asian markets rise on hopes for vaccine & economies reopening

Oil prices jump

TOKYO, May 19, (AP): Asian shares rose Tuesday on optimism about a potential vaccine for the coronavirus after hopes for a U.S. economic recovery in the second half of the year sent Wall Street into a rebound.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 1.5% to finish at 20,433.45. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 jumped 1.8% to 5,559.50. South Korea's Kospi was up 2.2% to 1,980.07. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 2.1% to 24,442.42, while the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.7% to 2,895.46.

India's Sensex added 1.8% to 30,558.23 and markets also rose in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

"The mood is assertively risk-on with sentiment having been tipped over by fresh hopes sparked for a COVID-19 vaccine," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist for IG.

Pan said reports that drug company Moderna had found promising results on a vaccine have "no doubt been the biggest mood booster for markets, given the fact that the lingering coronavirus implications remains the single biggest issue holding back the market from recovery and a contributor to other risk factors including US-China tensions."

Massachusetts-based Moderna saw its stock jump 20% in New York trading Monday.

The S&P 500 climbed 3.2%, its best day since early April. The gains erased all of its losses from last week, when the index posted its worst showing since late March and its third weekly loss in the last four. Bond yields rose broadly in another sign that investors were becoming more optimistic.

Investors were also encouraged by remarks over the weekend from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, who expressed optimism that the U.S. economy could begin to recover in the second half of the year. Once the outbreak has been contained, he said, the economy should be able to rebound "substantially."

The S&P 500 gained 90.21 points to 2,953.91. The benchmark index is still down 12.8% from its all-time high on February 19.

The Dow Jones Industrial Aver-



A woman wearing face mask walks past a bank electronic board showing the Hong Kong share index Tuesday, May 19, 2020. Asian shares rose Tuesday on optimism about a potential vaccine for the coronavirus after hopes for a U.S. economic recovery in the second half of the year sent Wall Street into a rebound. (AP)

age surged 3.9% to 24,597.37. The Nasdaq composite rose 2.4% to 9,234.83. Small-company stocks fared better than the rest of the market. The Russell 2000 index picked up 6.1%, to 1,333.69.

Investors are hoping that a working vaccine for COVID-19 can be developed and that it will help reassure people and businesses as economies reopen.

"The question of how quickly people come back, or will they come back to the way they used to do things, that's much different if you have a vaccine," said Megan Horneman, director of portfolio strategy at Verdence Capital Advisors.

Economies in Asia also are starting to relax restrictions, although worries remain about another surge in illnesses. In crowded cities it is difficult to maintain social distancing. As the cases drop, people are letting their guard down in going out and mingling in crowds.

But traders have been encouraged by signs that, so far at least, there hasn't been a lot of data implying a resurgence in the number of COVID-19 cases, said Sam

Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

"Of course, because we are responding to impressions, we could end up giving back some of these gains should additional information contest our beliefs," he said.

Technology, financial and industrial stocks accounted for a big slice of Monday's broad gains, along with companies that rely on consumer spending. Energy stocks also rose as the price of U.S. crude oil closed above \$30 a barrel for the first time in two months. Oil production cuts are kicking in at the same time that demand is rising as the U.S. and other countries ease some of the restrictions aimed at stemming the spread of the outbreak.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil added 43 cents to \$32.25 a barrel. It jumped 8.1% to settle at \$31.82 a barrel Monday. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 37 cents to \$35.18 a barrel.

Bonds yields rose overnight, another sign that pessimism was diminishing. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note, a benchmark for interest rates on many consumer loans, climbed to 0.72% from

0.64% late Friday. On Tuesday morning it was at 0.70%.

Fears of a crushing recession due to the coronavirus sent the S&P 500 into a skid of more than 30% from its high in February. Hopes for a relatively quick rebound and unprecedented moves by the Federal Reserve and Congress to stem the economic pain fueled a historic rebound for stocks in April.

May got off to a downbeat start as investors balance cautious optimism of a recovery as economies around the world slowly open up again against worries that the moves could lead to another surge in coronavirus infections and more economic uncertainty. But Monday's strong start to the week reversed all of the market's losses so far this month.

Wall Street is hoping that the reopening of businesses and the relaxation of stay-at-home mandates continue without any major setbacks, paving the way for corporate profits to bounce back.

The U.S. dollar inched up to 107.38 Japanese yen from 107.31 yen on Monday. The euro rose to \$1.0933 from \$1.0920.



Shaikh Nayef bin Khalid Al Khalifa, Chairman of Bahrain Tender Board

Over \$740m awarded in Q1 of 2020

Bahrain awards tenders worth \$4.9 billion in 2019

MANAMA, May 19: New data released by the Tender Board, an independent regulator of government procurement practices in Bahrain, revealed that the country awarded 1,730 tenders in 2019 worth a total of US\$4.9 billion.

The construction and engineering services sector took the lion's share of the awarded tenders, with 45% worth US\$2.2 billion. The oil and gas sector placed second with tenders valued at US\$1.2 billion or 24% of the total. The aviation sector came third accounting for 13% of awarded tenders valued at US\$627 million.

In the first quarter of 2020, Bahrain awarded 372 tenders worth a total of US\$740 million, with the procurement of equipment and materials accounting for 30% of the awarded tenders valued at US\$233 million. The construction and engineering services sector accounted for 26% of tenders worth US\$188.7 million, followed by the aviation sector, which took 18% of the tenders valued at US\$132 million. The fourth and fifth largest shares were taken by the oil and gas sector and the services sector, accounting for 15% of the awarded tenders worth US\$113 million, and 11% worth US\$82 million, respectively.

The results reaffirm Bahrain's efforts to continue public and private sector spending on major infrastructure projects despite the exceptional circumstances currently affecting the globe regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. The Kingdom's US\$32 billion infrastructure project pipeline is a major contributor and driver of national economic growth. Among the key projects currently underway is the Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) refinery modernisation project (now 40% com-

plete), the US\$1.1 billion Bahrain International Airport expansion project that will contribute to doubling the airport's capacity to 14 million passengers annually, and the fleet upgrade of Bahrain's national carrier Gulf Air.

Shaikh Nayef bin Khalid Al Khalifa, Chairman of Bahrain Tender Board, said: "The new data reflects the stability of the bids awarded in all sectors, and reinforces the sustainability of Bahrain's development services as part of the ongoing urban infrastructure expansion that the country is undertaking. In line with the objectives of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, these numbers encourage us to provide best-in-class services that meet and exceed our citizens' expectations and align with our national priorities to achieve sustainability and encourage investment, further driving the country's economic evolution."

He added: "In an effort to enhance market competitiveness, the Board sought to encourage a wider range of suppliers and contractors to participate in government tenders and bidding last year. The Tender Board achieved distinguished results in 2019 in terms of its selection of government tenders and auctions, with the number of public tenders constituting 70.5% of the 2019 total – up from 57% the previous year."

"In addition, the number of limited tenders declined from 25% to 19.3% of the total number of tenders, while the contracting ratio registered 10.3% in 2019, compared to 18% in 2018. This reflects the progress the Tender Board has made in adopting best international practices to increase its competitiveness and optimise the value of public funds spent."