

France is world champion in social spending: Study



Tourists stand under umbrellas as they look at the Eiffel Tower from the Trocadero Plaza

Paris, France

France's social spending is the highest in the developed world relative to the size of its economy, an OECD study found yesterday, as the government weighs how to respond to "yellow vest" protests.

Expenditure on healthcare, pensions and other social services was the equivalent of 31.2 per cent of GDP last year, said the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a Paris-based inter-governmental research institution.

Outlays have risen sharply since 1990, when they represented just under 25pc of GDP, and are nearly triple the level of roughly 12 percent of GDP in 1960.

That trend is broadly in line with other developed countries, reflecting the development of more comprehensive welfare states and higher pension spending as more people live longer.

But France's outlays are well above the average of 20.1pc of GDP for the 36 OECD member countries, with pensions making up a large chunk of the cash benefits paid out every month.

In neighbouring Germany, social spending was just 25pc of GDP last year, while in the US it made up just 19pc.

And when taking all public spending into account, such as police and defence, France leads Europe with government outlays the equivalent of 56.5pc of GDP in 2017, according to the most recent data available.

Gulf markets gain

● Dubai breaks three day losing streak

● Nasdaq-listed DP World gains after stake purchase

● 9 of 10 banks rise in Saudi

● Egypt exchange resets SODIC, MNHD after merger called off

Reuters

The Dubai stock market snapped a three day losing streak yesterday, boosted by its financial and property shares, while Saudi Arabia rose on the back of its banks.

The Dubai index was up 0.9 per cent higher with Emirates NBD, its largest bank, adding 2.1pc and its largest listed developer Emaar Properties gaining 2.2pc.

Gulf Arab economies are expected to grow at a slower pace than previously forecast, a quarterly Reuters poll of economists found, as oil output cuts, lower crude prices and weaker global growth put pressure on

Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 0.8 pc » 8,466 pts
DUBAI	▲ 0.9 pc » 2,517 pts
QATAR	▼ 0.4 pc » 10,650 pts
ABU DHABI	▲ 0.3 pc » 4,971 pts
EGYPT	▲ 0.2 pc » 13,507 pts
KUWAIT	▼ 0.4 pc » 5,482 pts
OMAN	▼ 0.4 pc » 4,166 pts
BAHRAIN	▲ 0.7 pc » 1,362 pts

regional economies.

Amlak Finance rose 2.2pc after announcing a renegotiation of restructuring terms with its financiers to allow more flexibility in adapting to "current market conditions".

Nasdaq-listed DP World increased 0.7pc after increasing its stake in its Australia unit. The port operator will spend at least \$250 million buying back some shares in its Australian port terminals unit.

Saudi Arabia's index rose 0.8pc, with nine out of 10 banks rising. Al Rajhi Bank was up 0.6pc and Samba Financial Group closed 1.7pc higher.

Petrochemical investor Alujain added 1.5pc after an update on the fire at its affiliate's plant. The company said it now expects the NATPET plant to start operating all units by the end of

September.

The Egyptian blue-chip index was up 0.2pc with its largest listed bank Commercial International Bank ` gaining 4.2pc.

The Egyptian Exchange yesterday cancelled all transactions made the previous day in local firms Sixth of October Development and Investment Company (SODIC) and Madinet Nasr for Housing and Development (MNHD).

The move followed SODIC's decision against a takeover of MNHD and involved their shares being suspended yesterday as the bourse reset prices.

Global Telecom Holding jumped 10pc before trading on its shares were suspended, pending a statement from the company after VEON Ltd, a major shareholder in the firm, said it was considering taking it private.

But Alexandria Mineral Oils Co plunged 7.8pc in active trade after posting a 62.6pc drop in its half-year net profit.

Qatar's index lost 0.4pc with Industries Qatar and Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat) both shedding 1.6pc.

Abu Dhabi's index added 0.3pc, with First Abu Dhabi Bank the largest lender in the United Arab Emirates gaining 0.6pc.

China to pass US in retail sales this year: forecast
New York, United States

Chinese consumers should outspend their American counterparts in 2019, with retail sales in the Asian giant continuing to grow in the coming years, according to an industry forecast.

Retail sales in China are expected to hit \$5.64 trillion, an increase of 7.5 per cent over 2018, while Americans are likely to spend \$5.53 trillion, a 3.3pc increase, according to the market research firm eMarketer. Growth in China's retail sector has been driven by online sales, which should expand by 30pc this year, reaching \$1.99 trillion.

This would mean more than 35pc of all Chinese retail sales will occur online, by far the highest proportion for ecommerce in the world. By comparison, online sales in the US represented only 10.9pc of the overall market in 2019, according to eMarketer.

China's online retail sales are already greater in value than in the US and should represent 55.8pc of global online ecommerce by the end of this year, rising to 63pc by 2022 -- when Americans will account for only 15pc.



Electricity and Water Affairs Minister Dr Abdulhussain Mirza receiving Nathalie Martin from economic organisation Global Insight. Martin is currently in Bahrain to prepare a special economic report on the kingdom in cooperation with The Japan Times. The minister reviewed the details of the next issue of the foundation's report and presented a comprehensive explanation of the achievements and projects in the electricity, water and sustainable energy sectors as well as the most important plans in the next five years.

Uber threatens to pull back from Barcelona

Barcelona, Spain

Uber yesterday threatened to pull back from Barcelona after the regional government unveiled new regulations which will severely restrict ride-hailing services, as taxis upped the pressure with a restive strike.

The US giant, which has seen conflicts in other European countries as taxis complain of threats to their livelihoods, said that if the rules are approved as planned next week, "We will not be able to continue providing our UberX service in Barcelona".

That is the cheapest Uber ride and commonly-used



Representative picture

in Spain where UberOne, a more expensive premium service, also operates. The news comes as taxis strike in Madrid and Barcelona against tourism vehicles with chauffeur or VTCs such as Uber or Cabify.

Volvo recalls 219,000 cars to check for fuel leaks
Stockholm, Sweden

Volvo Cars, owned by the Chinese group Geely, has recalled 219,000 diesel-engine cars to fix potential fuel leaks in the engine compartment, a spokesman said yesterday.

"Volvo preventative-ly recalls the cars to avert any possible future problems," the spokesman told AFP. "There are no reports alleging injuries or damages related to this issue."

The action concerns 11 models, including the upscale XC60 and XC90, that were sold in 2015 and 2016, he added.

GPIC and BANAGAS chiefs receive top ROSPA recognition

TDI | Manama

Bahrain National Gas Company (BANAGAS) Chief Executive Dr Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa and Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC) President Dr Abdulrahman Jawahery were elected to receive Global Award by the British Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) in recognition of their companies' success in the fields of gas and petrochemicals.

ROSPA Chief Executive Officer Errol Taylor spoke of the success of Dr Sheikh Mohammed and Dr Jawahery and their commitment to the highest standards of safety, health and environmental protection. He said these principles are among the most important, noting the success of BANAGAS and GPIC deserve pres-



The award ceremony

tigious RoSPA awards, including the Sir George Earl Trophy.

"Since joining ROSPA 25 years ago, I have been aware of the

inspirational leadership of BANAGAS and GPIC," said Taylor. "These are not just two of the world's leading industrial en-

terprises in terms of their industrial and commercial activities but are also exemplary in their approach to safety, the environ-

ment and community service.' He said ROSPA has now decided to invite the two to become their Award Ambassadors.

ROSPA Vice President Lord Jordan of Bournville invited Dr Sheikh Mohammed and Dr Jawahery to attend a ceremony at Dubai's Ritz Carlton Hotel, where a reception was organised in conjunction with the National Occupational Safety and Health Examination Board (NEBOSH).

Dr Sheikh Mohammed and Dr Jawahery said that they were delighted at the recognition, which is a tribute not only to their companies but also to the Bahraini industry.

They said ROSPA selecting them as Ambassadors was an honour and a source of pride and are determined to move forward with plans to raise performance in the field of safety, health, environment and accident prevention.