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Oil in the age of coronavirus: a U.S. shale bust like no other



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

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After rumours about health, North Korea state media report Kim Jong Un appearance



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the completion of a fertiliser plant, together with his younger sister Kim Yo Jong, in a region north of the capital, Pyongyang, in this image released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on May 2, 2020.

Reuters could not independently verify the KCNA report.

KCNA said Kim cut a ribbon at the ceremony on Friday and those attending the event “burst into thunderous cheers of ‘hurrah!’ for the Supreme Leader...”

Kim was seen in photographs smiling and talking to aides at the ribbon-cutting ceremony and also touring the plant. The authenticity of the photos, published on the website of the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper, could not be verified.

Heir unapparent: If North Korea faces succession, who might replace Kim?
Trump has no comment on report North Korea's Kim made public appearance
The United States strongly believes Kim is alive, according to a U.S. government source familiar with intelligence reporting, but has not been able to confirm that the photos of Kim were taken at Friday's event or explain why he had not been seen for weeks.

Asked about the KCNA report on Kim on Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump said he would “rather not comment on it yet.” The White House and State Department provided no update on Saturday on what they knew about Kim.

Many in the large crowd of people at the event, described as officials of the army, the ruling party and the community who worked on the project, were wearing face masks and standing some distance from the podium where Kim and his aides took part in the ceremony.

North Korea has not reported any cases of the coronavirus and has said it has been taking tough measures to prevent an outbreak. One suggested reason for Kim's absence is that he may have been taking precautions against coronavirus.

Kim was accompanied by senior North Korean officials, including his younger sister Kim Yo Jong and top aides vice-chairman Pak Pong Ju of the State Affairs Commission and cabinet premier Kim Jae Ryong, KCNA said.

KIM'S MOVEMENTS APPEAR STIFF, JERKY
Speculation about Kim's health has been rife after he missed the birth anniversary celebrations of state founder Kim Il Sung on April 15. The day is a major holiday in North Korea and Kim as leader usually pays a visit to the mausoleum where his grandfather lies in state.

He last made a public appearance on April 11 attending a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party politburo.

Following his absence from the anniversary, a South Korean news outlet specialising on the North reported that Kim was recovering after undergoing a cardiovascular procedure. A

flurry of other unconfirmed reports about his condition and his whereabouts followed.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the completion of a fertiliser plant, together with his younger sister Kim Yo Jong, in a region north of the capital, Pyongyang, in this image released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on May 2, 2020. KCNA/via REUTERS
Officials in South Korea and the United States expressed scepticism about the reports.

State TV footage on Saturday showed Kim's leg movements appearing stiff and jerky and one of the images showed a green golf cart in the background, similar to one he used in 2014 after a lengthy public absence.

“Preparing desks and chairs on the stage seemed a bit rare for such an outdoor occasion,” Nam Seong-wook, a professor of North Korean studies at Korea University, said of the ceremony.

“Kim might have some physical conditions that prevent him from standing too long and he needs to be seated after standing up for awhile.”
Nam said if Kim is unable to stand for long periods that maybe the reason he did not attend the anniversary event in April at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, where he would have had to stand for at least about an hour.



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Buffett’s Berkshire posts nearly \$50 billion loss as coronavirus causes pain

(Reuters) - Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Inc is being hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, posting a record quarterly net loss of nearly \$50 billion on Saturday and saying performance is suffering in several major operating businesses.

FILE PHOTO: Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Inc, pauses while playing bridge as part of the company annual meeting weekend in Omaha, Nebraska U.S. May 6, 2018. REUTERS/Rick Wilking/File Photo
Berkshire said most of its more than 90 businesses are facing “relatively minor to severe” negative effects from COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus and now punishing the global economy, with revenue slowing considerably in April even at businesses deemed “essential.”

The BNSF railroad saw shipping volumes of consumer products and coal fall, while Geico set aside money for car insurance premiums it no longer expects to collect. Some businesses cut salaries and furloughed workers, and retailers such as See’s Candies and the Nebraska Furniture Mart closed stores.

Buffett also allowed Berkshire’s cash stake to rise to a record \$137.3 billion from \$128 billion at the end of 2019.

That reflected the 89-year-old billionaire’s inability to make large, “elephant” size acquisitions for his Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate, and caution in buying stocks.

Berkshire said it bought only a net \$1.8 billion of stocks in the first quarter, and sold a net \$6.1 billion in April. It also said it repurchased \$1.7 billion of its own stock in the first quarter, but that was less than the prior quarter.

“Historically, Buffett has been so visible in times of crisis, and encouraged investors to take advantage of market sell-

offs, but if he doesn’t see opportunities even in his own stock, what are we to think?” said Jim Shanahan, an analyst at Edward Jones & Co in St. Louis.

Still, Shanahan said Berkshire is “as well positioned as it can be,” reflecting its diverse businesses and substantial liquidity and access to capital. He rates Berkshire “buy.”

Buffett and Vice Chairman Greg Abel will likely discuss the pandemic at Berkshire’s annual meeting on Saturday afternoon, which will be streamed on Yahoo Finance.

The pandemic forced Buffett to cancel “Woodstock for Capitalists,” a weekend of festivities that normally draws tens of thousands of people to Omaha.

BERKSHIRE STOCK UNDERPERFORMS
Berkshire’s first-quarter net loss was \$49.75

billion, or \$30,653 per Class A share, reflecting \$54.52 billion of losses on stock and other investments. Net earnings were \$21.66 billion, or \$13,209 per share, a year earlier.

An accounting rule requires Berkshire to report unrealized stock losses and gains with net results, causing huge swings that Buffett considers meaningless.

Quarterly operating profit, which Buffett considers a better performance measure, rose 6% to \$5.87 billion, or about \$3,624 per Class A share, from \$5.56 billion, or about \$3,388 per share.

But year-earlier results reflected a charge for investments linked to what prosecutors called a Ponzi scheme at a solar company, which Berkshire did not know about.

Operating profit at Berkshire’s businesses

fell 3%, with declines at BNSF, utilities and energy units, and manufacturing, service and retailing operations such as Precision Castparts, which Berkshire bought for \$32.1 billion in 2016. Geico was able to post a 28% gain in pre-tax underwriting profit because people drove less, resulting in fewer claims for crashes. Still, the insurer, like others, is offering relief on premiums to policyholders.

Vice Chairman Charlie Munger told The Wall Street Journal last month that Berkshire might close a few small businesses. Investors have been disappointed with Berkshire. Its stock price has fallen 19% in 2020, compared with a 12% drop in the Standard & Poor’s 500, despite Buffett’s prediction that Berkshire would outperform in down markets.

The decline came after Berkshire’s stock lagged the index by more than 20 percentage points in 2019, including dividends.

FILE PHOTO: Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Inc, pauses while playing bridge as part of the company annual meeting weekend in Omaha, Nebraska U.S. May 6, 2018. REUTERS/Rick Wilking/File Photo

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Dr. Anthony Fauci Says It’s Not Out Of The Question That The United States Could Have A Viable Coronavirus Vaccine By January

Coronavirus Vaccine By January Is ‘Doable,’ Dr. Fauci Says



Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told moderator Savannah Guthrie on the TODAY Show on Thursday that the government is quickly working on getting an answer to whether a vaccine is effective before beginning to manufacture hundreds of millions of doses.

“We want to go quickly, but we want to make sure it’s safe and it’s effective,” Fauci said. “I think that is doable if things fall in the right place. Remember, going back in time, I was saying in January and February that it would be a year to 18 months (to develop a vaccine), so January is a year, so it isn’t that much from what I had originally said.”

Scientists at England’s Oxford University said Wednesday that the vaccine they are developing could potentially be ready by September. (see below.) Manufacturing a potential vaccine would be on an accelerated timeline in order to get it to people as fast as possible.

“If so, we’re going to start ramping up production with the companies involved, and you do that at risk,” Fauci said. “In other words, you don’t wait until you get an answer before you start manufacturing. You, at risk, proactively start making it, assuming that it’s going to work. And if it does, then you can scale up and hopefully and get to that timeline.”



The drug remdesivir from Gilead Science, Inc.
As for being able to treat coronavirus patients right now, Fauci spoke about the experimental drug remdesivir a day after he said at the White House that it has “a clear-cut, significant, positive effect in diminishing the time to recovery.” Fauci’s comments came in the wake of a

large study of more than 1,000 patients from multiple sites around the world that was a placebo-controlled, randomized trial. Fauci said Thursday that type of study is the “gold standard” of determining if a drug is effective or not.

The group that received remdesivir was able to be discharged from the hospital within 11 days on average, compared to 15 days in the placebo group, Fauci said at the White House.

However, he emphasized on the TODAY Show that the study indicates that the drug made by Gilead Sciences helps in recovery, but still is not a complete cure for the virus.

“Although the results were clearly positive from a statistically significant standpoint, they were modest,” he said. “The improvement was a 31% better chance of recovering and getting out of the hospital. That’s important, but it’s the first step in what we project will be better and better drugs coming along. “So it’s good news, but I was very serious when I said this is not the total answer by any means. But it’s a very important first step.”



CEO of Gilead Sciences, Daniel O’Day
The CEO of Gilead Sciences, Daniel O’Day, will be on the TODAY Show Friday to talk more about the breakthrough. President Trump expressed his hope Wednesday that remdesivir will be fast-tracked for approval by the Food and

Drug Administration.

“It’s gonna be really quickly,” Fauci said on TODAY. “I would project that we’re going to be seeing that reasonably soon.” Remdesivir is taken intravenously and takes months to manufacture, raising the question of how quickly it will be able to reach patients in need on a large scale. Fauci’s understanding is that will not be an issue.

“I’m pretty confident that will be the case because I believe that they’re committed to get this out as quickly as possible,” he said.

Fauci’s comments also come as more states across the country rescind restrictions on public life and reopen businesses. While he believes there will be “blips” of virus hotspots, he also believes states can be successful if they have the infrastructure set up to identify, isolate and contact trace coronavirus cases and “don’t just leap over” important steps.

“If they do that, I feel cautiously optimistic,” he said. (Courtesy msn.com)

Related
AstraZeneca teams up with Oxford University to develop coronavirus vaccine — first results from human trials expected in June or July
AstraZeneca CEO says will know by June or July whether the vaccine works



British drug maker AstraZeneca has teamed up with the University of Oxford to develop and manufacture a vaccine for coronavirus, in a move that could allow for rapid vaccination around the world if the treatment proves to be effective.

Human trials of the vaccine developed by the university’s Jenner Institute and Oxford Vaccine Group entered phase-one testing last week, with hundreds of people aged 18 to 55 volunteering across five trial centres in southern England.

“As COVID-19 continues its grip on the

world, the need for a vaccine to defeat the virus is urgent,” Pascal Soriot, chief executive of AstraZeneca UK:AZN US:AZN, said in a statement on Thursday.

Speaking to BBC radio, Soriot said: “It is definitely a risk to launch into the development of the vaccine but now is the time to take those kind of risks.”

“By June, July we will already have a very good idea of the direction of travel in terms of its potential efficacy,” he added.

Shares in AstraZeneca, which are up 8.8% in the year to date, were up 1.90% in early morning trading in London. (Courtesy <https://www.marketwatch.com/>)



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Editor's Choice



Ihor Ponomarchuk, a Ukrainian serviceman injured in a military conflict in the country's eastern regions, and his bride Anna Diolomina wearing protective face masks arrive for a wedding ceremony at the Main Military Clinical Hospital amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Kiev, Ukraine May 2, 2020. REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



An anti lockdown protester is detained by police officers in London, following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), London, Britain, May 2, 2020. REUTERS/Toby Melville TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A Salvadoran transgender woman poses for a picture at a migrant encampment during the outbreak of COVID-19 in Matamoros



New White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany addresses her first press briefing in the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington, U.S., May 1, 2020. REUTERS/Carlos Barria TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A CNN cameraman is helped by a photographer after being pepper-sprayed in the face by the riot police during a May Day rally in Valparaiso, Chile May 1, 2020. REUTERS/Rodrigo Garrido TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Nuria Bravo, 38, and her husband Francisco Pimentel, 40, pose for a photo with their newborn son Jesus as they arrive to their home from the hospital after she gave birth during a lockdown amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Ronda, southern Spain, . 2020. REUTERS/Jon



Demonstrators hold May Day protests in Manhattan, New York City



Bolivian citizens, who were stranded in Chile after the border was closed as preventive measure, gather as they cross the border between Chile and Bolivia to get to their country, following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Colchane,

Second Stimulus Plan That Would Send \$2,000 To Americans Every Month For Six Months Is Gaining Support



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Americans could get checks of \$2,000 every month for six months via a second stimulus plan that is gaining support amid the coronavirus crisis. Reps. Tim Ryan from Ohio and Ro Khanna of California proposed another bill called the Emergency Money For the People Act as COVID-19 continues to pummel the US economy. House Democrats don't think the current amount of \$1,200 - a key part of the 2.2 trillion stimulus bill - is enough to combat mass unemployment, reports say. This bill expands who is eligible, how much checks amount to, and how people will pocket the payment. It will continue until national employment levels return to what they were pre-pandemic.



People file unemployment applications in Hialeah, Florida. (Photo EPA)

And Ryan said support for the proposal is increasing. "Currently building momentum in the House to include in the next package," the Ohio congressman tweeted Monday. As 22 million people file for unemployment, Americans aged 16+ who make less than \$130,000 a year will be set to receive \$2,000 a month through this plan. Married couples who earn less than \$260,000 will get \$4,000 per month and families who qualify will pocket \$500 per child, for up to three children. Individuals who make above \$130,000 will receive 5 percent less for each \$1,000 they made above the threshold amount and the same goes for married couples filing jointly who make \$260,000.



Businesses shuttered in New York, resulting in mass unemployment.

(Credit EPA)
Currently people who make \$99,000 or more are not eligible for a stimulus payment and jointly-filing married couples making more than \$198,000 also don't get relief. If the House and Senate approves this legislation, people would receive their first installment 14 days after the bill is enacted. Under this plan, Americans can receive the money via direct deposit, check, pre-paid debit card, or significantly, "through an electronic transfer application" on a cellphone. This cash injection will also be made available to people with no fixed address.



The bill would have to be passed in the House and Senate before being signed into law by Trump. (Photo/Associated Press/AP)
The new plan would make the process of receiving this Federal money significantly easier as thousands of people struggled to get the \$1,200 payment because they were only sent out to bank accounts listed with the IRS or tax returns. The second wave of these stimulus checks could take up to 20 weeks to reach struggling Americans, including retirees and veterans. The program will continue sending out much-needed cash for six months unless the employment-to-population ratio returns to 60 percent before the end of the sixth month period, the proposal says. And for people who may not have filed their tax returns for 2018/2019, they can submit income information via a Treasury application process which is verified by two consecutive paychecks. The new plan also caters for college

students and people with disabilities, who were excluded under the previous relief bill.



President Donald Trump smiles as he holds his signed H.R.266, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement bill. Photo/Alamy Live News)

These hard-hit groups would receive the \$2,000 payment directly and their parent or guardian gets the dependent credit come tax time. However, as with the CARES Act, significant changes could be made to this legislation before it arrives on the desk of President Trump to be signed into law.



The proposed bill tacks on an additional \$800 versus the current legislation. Credit: US Treasury Department
The Emergency Money for the People Act must be voted on and approved by both the House and Senate before Trump issues his signature. Americans who are still receiving paper checks from the current legislation are also getting a signed letter from the president explaining why they're getting them. "We are fully committed to ensuring that you and your family have the support you need to get through this time," a copy of the letter obtained by CNN reads. (Courtesy https://www.the-sun.

com/new)

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綜合報導 據日本放送協會(NHK)報道,伴隨日本嚴峻的新冠肺炎疫情形勢,該國針對流浪漢等生活困窘人員的援助活動也蒙受影響,讓這部分人群的生活雪上加霜。

據NHK針對東京都內開展相關援助活動的30個組織所做的採訪得知,其中有15個組織或將對援助活動作出調整,包括停止向流浪者等生活困窘人員提供食物、縮小活動規模和減少食物提供次數等。

對此,長年致力於此類援助活動的日本高千穗大學教授木村正人指出,“為無家可歸者等生活困窘人員提供食物的民間活動,因為病毒感染風險而陷入困境,當下的情況和自然災害幾乎壹樣”,他呼籲,“不能只讓民間承擔風險,公共部門有必要在提供食物等方面伸出援手”。

截至當地時間26日中午12時許,日本新冠肺炎累計確診病例達13238例,死亡病例360例。日本從4月7日起進入緊急狀態後,多地相繼出臺政策,要求非生活必要的行業暫停營業,並呼籲民眾減少外出。

日本疫情形勢嚴峻 或致無家可歸人群生活雪上加霜



擔憂遊客紮堆 日本弘前市長呼籲市民勿分享櫻花照

綜合報導 日本境內新冠病毒疫情蔓延,青森縣弘前市長櫻田宏罕見呼籲市民,不要上傳分享該市的櫻花照片,目的是為了避免大量賞櫻遊客“見照即來”,造成疫情擴散。

據報道,目前正值日本壹年壹度的黃金周長假,弘前市弘前公園是知名賞櫻景點,櫻田宏罕見呼籲市民,不要在社交網站上分享櫻花開花信息,也不要分享現場的櫻花照片。

很多市民對市長罕見呼籲表示理解;但也有市民認為,雖然無法前往現場賞櫻,至少讓他們看看照片。

報道稱,弘前市政府為避免人群聚集,到5月6日前都暫時關閉弘前公園,但公園附近的道路還是可以看到外牆目前盛開的櫻花,也吸引路人駐足拍照。

壹名40多歲女性苦笑稱,畢竟在這樣的狀況下,也是沒有辦法的事,“今年就壹個人獨享櫻花照片”。還有大部分的路人對櫻田宏的呼籲表示

理解,稱“這也是沒辦法的事”“有其必要”。

不過,壹名因工作造訪弘前市的青森市民說,叫大家不要上傳照片到社交網站,“會不會有點太過了?”

櫻田宏的呼籲內容已通過市政府官網公告周知,為了不讓路人在公園附近駐足,市政府也在外牆附近安排了安保人員進行勸導。

弘前市政府表示,非常明白大家想上傳櫻花照片的心情,但這樣的行為很可能造成其他看到照片的民眾跑來,“現在希望大家都能自我克制”。

與此同時,秋田縣仙北市角館町也是壹處賞櫻名所,仙北市政府職員們也同聲呼籲,希望大家不要來賞櫻。仙北市政府觀光課人員表示,雖然此舉對有意來賞櫻的觀光客感到抱歉,但為了防止疫情擴散,還是希望大家今年不要外出賞櫻。

日本 54 個醫療機構發生院內感染 涉 783 名患者和醫生

綜合報導 據日本共同社從日本看護協會的調查結果獲悉,隨著新冠病毒疫情蔓延,截至4月20日,至少19個都道府縣的54個設施中,發生了壹家醫療機構內確診多例感染病例的情況,感染的患者和醫生等人數達783人。

該協會還強調,口罩等防護用品不足的問題嚴重,目前未能採取充分的防止感染對策,呼籲向醫療從事者提供支援。

據報道,在調查中,將醫療機構存在感染或疑似感染且出現多人感染的病例,以及住院壹定時期的患者感染的病例等,定義為“院內感染”。該協會參考日本全國醫療機構的主頁等進行了統計。在確認單獨患者或職員感染後,並未出現感染者的設施被排除在外。

從都道府縣來看,東京都感染病例數量最多,在8個醫療設施中共375人感

染。之後依次為北海道、兵庫縣、福岡縣、大阪府。

報道稱,該協會表示,在醫療機構、上門看護站、護理設施之中,口罩和防護服等防護用品不足,未能採取充分的防止感染措施。據悉,由於防護服不足,也有醫療機構使用塑料袋進行應對。

在調查中,還發現了歧視和偏見情況。由於壹些護士所工作的醫療機構收治新冠病毒感染者,護士的孩子被要求避免上托兒所。此外,也有因護士身份而被出租車拒載,以及被餐飲店拒

絕入內的情況。據稱,也存在護士的丈夫被單位要求休息,孩子在學校受欺負的事例。

該協會會長呼籲稱:“傳染病也會引發不安、恐懼等心理學反應,以及歧視、偏見等社會學反應。希望大家對醫療工作者每天的工作給予信賴和支持。”



新加坡擬允許遠距離宣誓
讓婚姻大事不受疫情影響

綜合報導 新加坡實施抗疫封城“阻斷措施”,婚姻宣誓儀式也須暫停。不過,新加坡社會及家庭發展部部長李智升表示,政府將提出壹項新法案允許遠距離宣誓儀式,讓民眾婚姻大事不受疫情影響。

為遏止疫情擴大,新加坡延長阻斷措施至6月1日,呼籲民眾盡量待在家。在阻斷措施實施期間,新加坡的婚姻宣誓儀式都須暫停。

李智升在社交媒體發文表示,當前這場流行病讓許多預備結婚的情侶對婚禮規劃感到焦慮。

不過,他說:“即便在這場危機中,我們也應該要讓結婚等人生大事能持續進行,我們不應該讓新冠病毒影響那些已經準備好共度壹生的人。”

李智升指出,政府將於5月4日國會舉行會議時,提出壹項新法案,允許婚姻儀式可利用科技、以遠距離方式進行,新人們無須親赴婚姻註冊局舉行宣誓儀式。他表示,若國會通過這項法案,遠距婚姻宣誓儀式最快5月中旬就可實施。

遠距離婚姻宣誓的條件包括雙方至少有壹位是新加坡公民或永久居民;新人提呈的證件必須是在本地簽發。另外,在婚姻宣誓儀式舉行期間,包括證婚人及新郎、新娘,所有人都需要在新加坡。

新加坡近來暴發大規模外勞宿舍群聚感染,導致確診人數激增。新加坡衛生部27日發布最新公告,確認新增病例799例,確診總病例達14423例。