

Turkey to lift travel ban, open gyms, restaurants on June 1

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In this photo provided by Turkey's Transportation Ministry, Minister Adil Karaismailoğlu poses for images as a train departs for Istanbul from Ankara's train station, Turkey, Thursday, May 28, 2020. Turkey has resumed limited intercity train operations after a two-month suspension as the country eases restrictions imposed to contain the coronavirus outbreak.(Transportation Ministry via AP)

A coronavirus travel ban between Turkey's worst affected cities is being lifted while restaurants, cafes and sports facilities will reopen on June 1, the country's president said Thursday, under the next phase of plans to roll back pandemic restrictions.

In a televised address following a weekly Cabinet meeting, Recep Tayyip Erdogan also said public sector workers, except for those with [chronic illnesses](#), will return to their workplaces on June 1, while child care facilities will be allowed to resume their services.

Erdogan said parks, beaches and museums will also be opened up while people will be permitted to attend open-air concerts. Bars and hookah bars, will remain shut.

The president also said that a stay-at-home order for people aged 65 and over, and for minors will remain for a while longer. Youths aged 19 and 20 will now be allowed outdoors, he said.

The announcement comes amid a drop in the number of reported daily COVID-19 deaths and infections in the past weeks, although some experts say the lifting of restrictions may be premature.

In his speech, Erdogan called on Turks to exercise caution, wear masks and stick to social distancing guidelines.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry announced a new, two-day curfew over the weekend in 15 of the country's worst-affected provinces, including Ankara and Istanbul.



Municipality workers disinfect the courtyard of historical Haci Bayram Mosque, in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, May 28, 2020. Turkish authorities prepare mosques for communal prayers at limited capacity, observing social distancing rules, starting with Friday prayers since mosques shut down back in March; worshippers supposed to pray outside in mosque courtyards.(AP Photo/Ali Unal)

Earlier Thursday, intercity train services resumed on a limited basis. Trains will make 16 trips daily, connecting the cities of Ankara, Istanbul, Konya and Eskisehir.

The trains are operating at half-capacity, and passengers are being allowed on board only with a government-issued permission to travel and a code certifying they are not being monitored for a suspected COVID-19 infection.

Turkish Transportation Minister Adil Karaismailoglu said travelers showing signs of illness would not be allowed onto trains. Any passenger exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms on a train will be taken to a special "isolation section" and handed over to [health officials](#) at the nearest station, he said.

The government has also opened shopping malls and hairdressers. Mosques will allow congregations for two daytime prayers starting Friday.



A Municipality worker disinfects the courtyard of historical Hacı Bayram Mosque, in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, May 28, 2020. Turkish authorities prepare mosques for communal prayers at limited capacity, observing social distancing rules, starting with Friday prayers since mosques shut down back in March; worshippers supposed to pray outside in mosque courtyards.(AP Photo/Ali Unal)



A Municipality worker disinfect the inside of historical Hacı Bayram Mosque, in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, May 28, 2020. Turkish authorities prepare mosques for communal prayers at limited capacity, observing social distancing rules, starting with Friday prayers since mosques shut down back in March; worshippers supposed to pray outside in mosque courtyards.(AP Photo/Ali Unal)



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Turkey's [total number](#) of confirmed infections has surpassed 160,000, with the Health Ministry announcing 1,182 new cases in the past 24 hours and 30 new deaths, raising the total COVID-19 fatalities to 4,461.

Turkey ranks tenth in an international tally by Johns Hopkins University for the number of cases. Experts believe infections globally could be much more than reported.

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