

**OUR FULL FIVE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST: SEE INSIDE**

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## “We are abandoned,” residents in COVID-hit Madrid district await lockdown decision

Madrid.— Residents in Madrid’s poorer districts said yesterday they felt abandoned and stigmatised as politicians pondered whether to put them under lockdown because of their higher COVID-19 infection rate. The gap between poorer and richer areas is at the heart of a tense debate in Spain over how to curb an increase in new coronavirus cases.

A senior official from the

Madrid region said on Wednesday authorities envisaged targeted lockdowns for the most affected areas.

Madrid’s regional chief Isabel Diaz Ayuso said earlier this week that “the way of life of immigrants” was partly to blame for the surge in cases, attracting huge criticism. “They have created like a stigma,” said Nathaniel Eliot, an English teacher from Boston who has been

living in Puente de Vallecas for 15 years, referring to the politicians’ comments.

Vallecas, a southern district with a lower average income and higher immigrant population, has one of the highest infection rates in Madrid. It is almost six times higher than in Chamberi, one of the wealthier, northern districts.

Regional officials said they would announce their decision late last night.



# THE BIG BANK DEAL IN SPAIN

**C**aixabank has agreed to buy Bankia for 4.3 billion euros (\$5.1 billion) in an all-share deal that creates Spain’s biggest domestic lender and signals a pick up in mergers among Europe’s banks as they battle the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The merger will create the largest do-

mestic bank by assets with a combined market value of more than 16 billion euros (\$19 billion), in a deal underpinned by annual cost savings of 770 million euros, the companies said yesterday.

European banks are under growing pressure to join forces to deal with rising bad debts and record-low interest

rates. Italy’s Intesa Sanpaolo is taking over Unione di Banche Italiane, and Spain’s Sabadell has also held informal talks about a possible tie-up.

Bankia chairman Jose Ignacio Goirigolzarri told analysts the deal had been done in anticipation of a “more complex environment” triggered by the pandemic.

“We believe we are in a disruptive moment and in a disruptive moment we think it is necessary to take decisions and react,” said Goirigolzarri, who will become the executive chairman of the new lender, albeit with limited powers. Caixabank and state-backed Bankia did not say how many jobs would go or branches would close.

**NUMBER OF CASES DOUBLE**

## Britain’s second lockdown?

● Britain was yesterday considering whether to impose a second national lockdown, after new COVID-19 cases almost doubled to 6,000 per day, hospital admissions rose and infection rates soared across parts of northern England and London. The United Kingdom has reported the fifth largest number of deaths from COVID-19 in the world, after the United States, Brazil, India and Mexico, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University of Medicine.

**In hard-hit Spain, the poor  
suffer even more from the  
pandemic: See Inside**