

Treaty to curb mercury exposure takes effect

Paris
A 128-nation treaty to curb exposure to the dangerous heavy metal mercury entered into force Wednesday, the United Nations announced on the convention's website. Adopted in 2013, the Minamata Convention on Mercury was named for the Japanese fishing town in which thousands were poisoned by the deadly element in the mid-20th century.



US jobless claims hit 6m low in August

Washington
New claims for US unemployment benefits fell sharply in early August, reaching their lowest weekly level in six months, according to Labor Department data released Thursday. The new figures suggested labor markets continued to tighten and that the jobless was likely to remain near its current 16-year-low of 4.3 percent.



Aside from Lufthansa, we are in contact with two other interested parties from the aviation industry. The negotiations have been going on for weeks and all three airlines were financially sound and large enough to offer Air Berlin a secure future while keeping Germany as an operations hub."

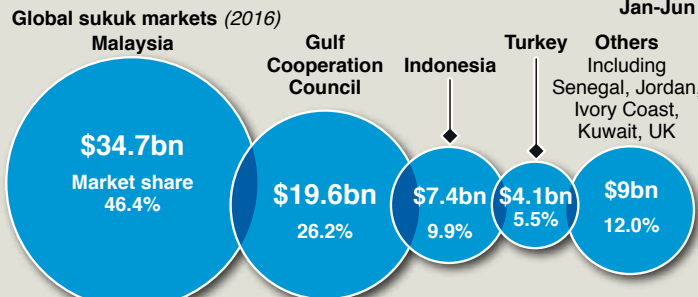
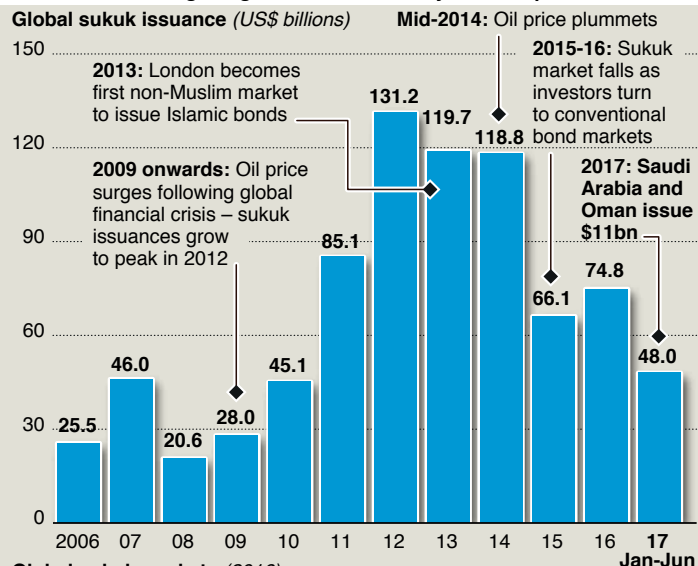


Thomas Winkelmann

Air Berlin chief executive

Low oil prices drive sukuk markets

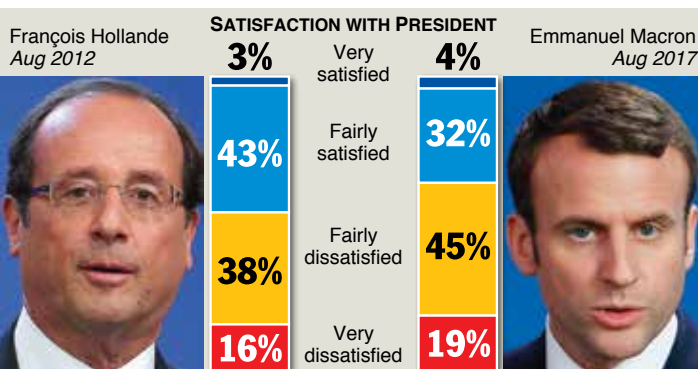
Global sukuk markets – Islamic bonds that comply with Sharia law – surged in the first half of 2017 to \$48 billion, driven by governments covering budget deficits caused by weak oil prices



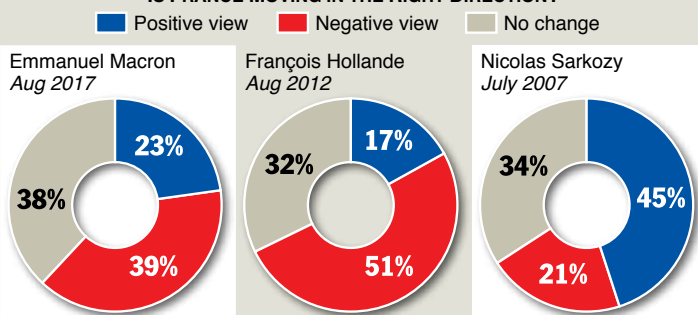
Sources: Malaysia International Islamic Financial Centre, PwC, S&P Global © GRAPHIC NEWS

Macron's popularity wanes after 100 days

French President Emmanuel Macron is now more unpopular than his predecessor François Hollande after his first 100 days in office, according to an Ifop poll for Le Figaro



IS FRANCE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?



Study carried out with sample of 1,001 persons representative of French population aged 18 years and over, between August 7-9

Sources: AFP, Le Figaro Pictures: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

India clears \$650m Boeing army chopper deal: sources

New Delhi
India approved a \$650 million purchase of six attack choppers Thursday from US aviation giant Boeing, officials said, as it boosts its military might amid border tensions with China and Pakistan.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), which approves big-ticket purchases, gave the green light to acquire six additional Apache helicopters after 22 were bought as part of a \$2.5 billion deal in 2015.

Two defence ministry sources told AFP on the condition of anonymity that the deal was approved exclusively for the army, without providing further details including a date for delivery.

"DAC approved procurement of

six Apache helicopters along with associated equipment for the army totally about 4,168 crore rupees (\$650 million)," an official told AFP by text message. The initial batch of 22 Apaches -- equipped with Hellfire and Stinger missiles -- replaced the Indian Air Force's ageing fleet.

Soon after the first Apache acquisition, the army put in a separate request for a fleet of at least 39, one of the officials told AFP.

It will be the first time the Indian army has received attack helicopters and it hopes to deploy the craft along India's high-altitude frontiers -- particularly its border in the east with regional rival China.

New Delhi and Beijing are locked in a tense impasse over a strategic

Himalayan plateau where hundreds of Indian and Chinese soldiers have been squaring off against each other for more than three months.

India -- the world's largest defence importer -- has been investing tens of billions in updating its Soviet-era military hardware to counter long-standing territorial disputes with its nuclear-armed neighbours.

India has signed several big-ticket defence deals since Prime Minister Narendra Modi stormed to power in 2014.

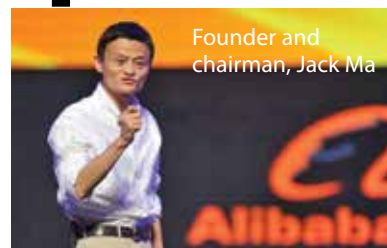
In April, it signed a military deal with Israel worth nearly \$2 billion which includes an advanced defence system of medium-range surface-to-air missiles, launchers and communications technology.

Alibaba profit doubles

Shanghai
Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba said yesterday its net profit almost doubled in the latest quarter on the back of solid revenue growth in its core shopping business and in cloud computing.

Alibaba, which has made billionaire founder Jack Ma one of China's richest men and a global e-commerce icon, has seen its New York-listed shares soar 80 percent since last December on perennially robust earnings.

With those shares at all-time highs,



Founder and chairman, Jack Ma

the company's market worth has been fast approaching that of industry leader Amazon.

Alibaba said net income in the quarter which ended June 30 was 14.7

billion yuan (\$2.2 billion), a year-on-year increase of 94 percent.

Alibaba thoroughly dominates e-commerce in China mainly through its Taobao platform, and its continued strong earnings performances have underlined the strength of the sector even as the country's broader economic growth has slowed.

Overall revenues in the quarter rose 56 percent to 50.2 billion yuan, beating the \$7.2 billion average of analyst estimates compiled by Bloomberg.