

Regional markets struggle

Shareholders to vote on whether to keep Drake & Scull operating

Abu Dhabi's Aldar drops after announcing spin-off plan

Reuters | Dubai

Middle Eastern stock markets mostly fell yesterday as a plunge by loss-making construction firm Drake & Scull dampened Dubai and a late wave of selling in Saudi Arabian banks dragged down that market.

Dubai's index fell 0.8 per cent

as Drake & Scull plunged its 10pc daily limit to a record low of 0.405 dirham, bringing its losses this year to 82pc.

The company said shareholders would meet on Sept. 27 to decide whether to dissolve the company, under an article of United Arab Emirates company law requiring firms to vote on whether they should continue operating if their accumulated losses have reached half of issued share capital.

The firm subsequently issued another statement stressing its board and management would do their utmost to ensure it continued operating, but this did not boost the stock price.

Ajman Bank, which holds 13.06pc of Drake & Scull shares

Closing Bell

SAUDI	▼ 0.8%	» 7,635
DUBAI	▼ 0.8%	» 2,810
ABU DHABI	▼ 1.2%	» 4,934
QATAR	▲ 0.6%	» 9,990
EGYPT	▼ 0.9%	» 15,488
KUWAIT	▼ 0.1%	» 5,330
BAHRAIN	▼ 0.2%	» 1,341
OMAN	▲ 1.0%	» 4,531

according to exchange data, fell 2.1pc. The bank said it had no exposure to the company and was holding the shares as collateral for a financing facility provided to local private equity firm Tabarak, which was the beneficial owner.

Abu Dhabi's index fell 1.2pc as Aldar Properties dropped 2.1pc after saying it was spinning off its recurring-revenue assets worth 20 billion dirhams (\$5.4 billion) into a new, fully owned subsidiary, which would help it raise capital more cheaply.

But Dana Gas rose 2.6pc after Crescent Petroleum said it obtained approval to raise its stake in Dana to over 20pc. As of early July, it owned 19.04pc, according to Thomson Reuters data; its stake was diluted by the conversion of Dana's convertible sukuk into equity.

In Saudi Arabia, the index fell 0.8pc as Banque Saudi Fransi lost 2.0pc and the biggest lender, National Commercial Bank, dropped 1.2pc.

Petrochemical stocks opened strong after Brent oil surged near \$80 a barrel overnight, but the sector closed lower with top producer Saudi Basic Industries losing 0.7pc. Chemanol rose 2.1pc, however.

MedGulf, which had jumped its 10pc daily limit on Tuesday, added a further 5.3pc to 16.00 riyals. Shareholders as of end-Wednesday will obtain tradeable rights to buy new shares at 10 riyals each.

Qatar bucked the downtrend with its index gaining 0.6pc to a 16-month high. Qatar International Islamic Bank added 2.9pc as buyers rotated through the banking sector, following strong gains by other Qatari banks earlier in the week.

Serb spends 36 years collecting currencies



Zoran Milosevic holding the last addition to his collection of banknotes and coins from around the world, a coin from Bermuda, at his home in the village of Pavlovci, 70 km west of capital Belgrade

pavlovci, Serbia

His day job is working as a locksmith but out of hours Zoran Milosevic's passion is to hunt down rare coins and bank notes as part of a 36-year quest to collect all the currencies of the world.

At his home in the northern Serbian village of Pavlovci,

Milosevic showed off decades of his painstaking work with colourful notes and coins lined up under protective glass.

He said he had managed to collect 194 different currencies, including some which are no longer in use, and his achievement was even more impressive as he rarely left his Serbian home to find them.

US-Canada trade deal possible

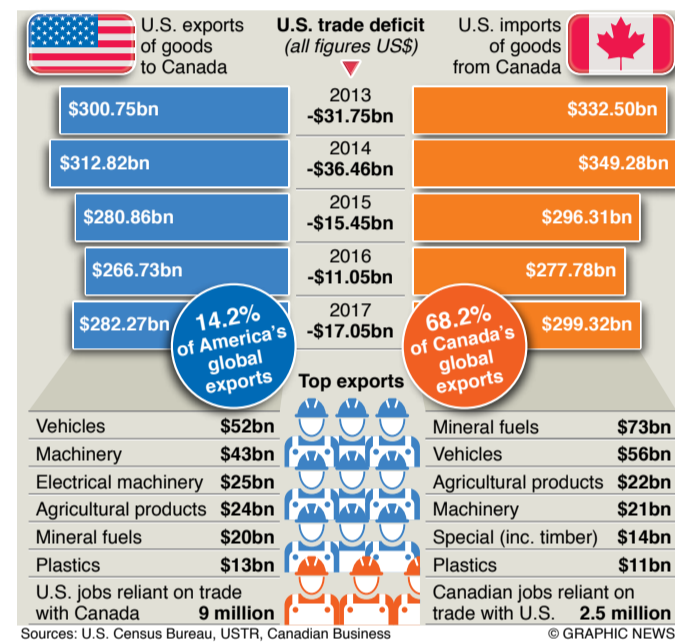
Graphic News

Canada and the United States are said to be close to a trade deal if sticking points over Canada's protected dairy sector, protection of media firms, and a system for settling trade disputes are resolved.

Canadian foreign minister Chrystia Freeland announced a breakthrough this week in talks with the United States on a revamped North American Free Trade Agreement, saying a new deal was now "eminently possible."

US President Trump has lambasted Canada for protecting its dairy farmers with hefty tariffs.

An Associated Press fact check concludes that Trump is basically right about the tariffs. Canada allows a small amount of dairy and poultry imports into the country duty-free or at very low taxes. Anything above the faces punitive import duties: Consider 245 per cent tariffs on cheese. And 298 per cent



on butter.

The World Trade Organization says Canadian dairy tariffs average nearly 249 per cent, compared with the United

States' 17 per cent.

Despite Canadian barriers the United States last year ran a \$474 million trade surplus with Canada.

Apple unveils iPhone Xs premium phones in 2 sizes

AFP | Cupertino, United States

Apple yesterday unveiled updated versions of its priciest iPhones along with a new smartwatch that allows users to take their own electrocardiograms.

The California tech giant revealed its iPhone XS and iPhone XS Max, updating the top-of-the-line handsets released a year earlier.

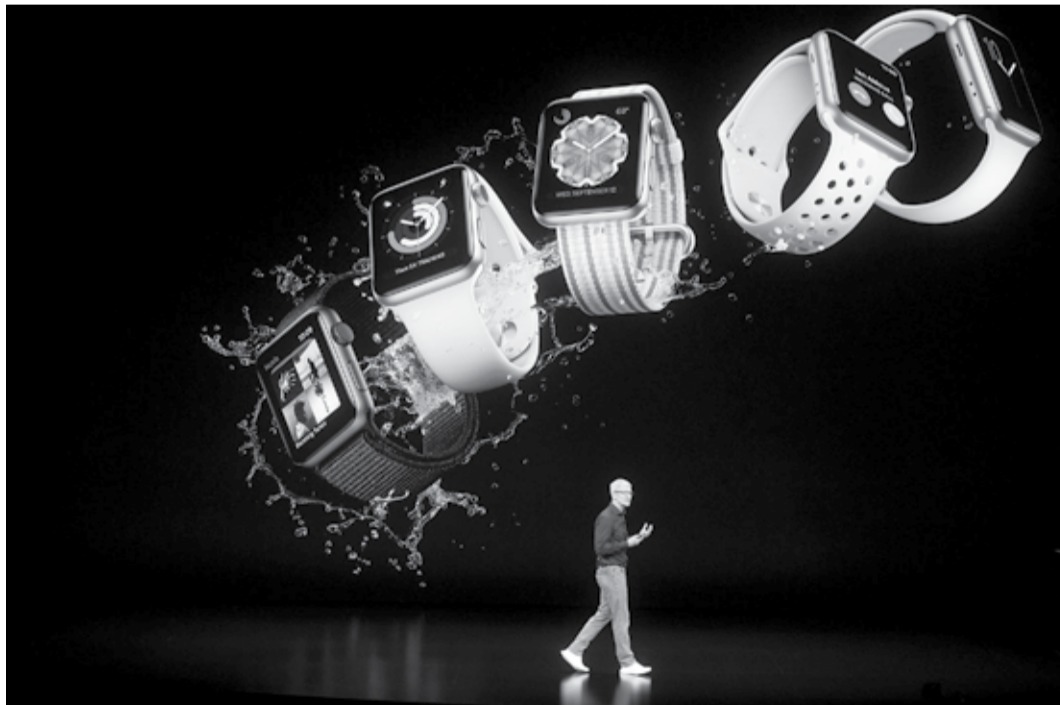
"We are going to take iPhone X to the next level," chief executive Tim Cook said at a media event at the company's headquarters in Cupertino, California.

The new phones have displays of 5.8 and 6.5 inches, boosting screen size while keeping a small-format handset, Apple vice president Phil Schiller said.

The September event allows the company to unveil its latest offerings before the key holiday shopping season.

While the iPhone has made Apple the world's most valuable company, worth more than \$1 trillion, it has slipped to third place among smartphone makers as Chinese-based Huawei has grabbed the number two spot.

Analyst Patrick Moorhead of



Apple CEO Tim Cook speaks during an Apple event

Moor Insights & Strategy said Apple had done enough "to keep its smartphone growth going until the competition responds."

New smartwatch features

Apple also introduced a fourth generation of Apple Watch with

a major redesign -- and a series of features designed to improve its performance as a medical and health device.

The watch, sold in the United States from \$399 and up, will be available in stores on September 21.

"Apple Watch has become an intelligent guardian for your health," chief operating officer Jeff Williams said.

He highlighted a major innovation -- the watch's ability to perform an electrocardiogram. "This is the first ECG product

offered over the counter directly to consumers," he said.

"Now you can take an ECG any time, anywhere, right from the wrist."

The device also detects when a person suffers a fall, seen as an important feature for elderly or disabled users.

If a person falls, and then is motionless, the watch will call emergency services, he added.

'Crossroads'

Research firm CB Insights said Apple is at a "crossroads" a decade after introducing the iPhone.

"Looking for the next wave, Apple is clearly expanding into augmented reality and wearables with the Apple Watch and AirPods wireless headphones," the firm said.

"But the next 'big one' -- a success and growth driver on the scale of the iPhone -- has not yet been determined. Will it be augmented reality, auto, wearables? Or something else entirely?"

Cook said Apple was nearing its two billionth device for its mobile operating system known as iOS.

US incomes rises as poverty rate declines

Reuters | Washington

The median US household income rose for a third straight year in 2017 and the poverty rate declined further, government data showed yesterday.

The Census Bureau said in its Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage and Supplemental Poverty Measure report that median household incomes increased 1.8 per cent to \$61,400 last year.

The report also showed the poverty rate -- the percentage of people living in poverty -- fell to 12.3pc last year from 12.7pc in 2016. The Census Bureau also said about 28.5 million residents did not have health insurance in 2017, not statistically different from the previous year.

While the poverty threshold in 2017 was an income of \$24,858 for a family of four, analysts say the number resembles a trend of declining poverty that has persisted since 2014 under the tenure of former President Barack Obama.

The economy added 2.2 million jobs in 2017, with the unemployment ending the year at 4.1pc.

New York overtakes London as top financial centre

Reuters | London

New York has overtaken London as the world's most attractive financial centre, a survey said on Wednesday, as Britain's decision to leave the European Union prompts banks to shift jobs out of the city to preserve access to Europe's single market.

Brexit poses the biggest challenge to the City of London's finance industry since the 2007-2009 financial crisis, since it might mean banks and insurers lose access to the EU, the world's biggest trading bloc.

New York took first place, followed by London, Hong Kong and Singapore in the Z/Yen global financial centres index, which ranks 100 financial centres on factors such as infrastructure and access to quality staff.

London's ranking fell by eight points from six months ago, the biggest decline among the top contenders. The survey's authors said the drop reflected the uncertainty around Brexit. "We are getting closer and closer to exit day and we still don't know whether London will be able to trade with all the other European financial centres," Mark Yeandle, the co-creator of the index, said.

"The fear of losing business to other centres is driving the slight decline and people are concerned about London's competitiveness."

Since Britain voted more than two years ago to leave the EU, some of the world's most powerful finance companies in London have begun moving staff to the EU to preserve the existing cross-border trading.