

This file picture shows a woman walking past the Alibaba booth during an exhibition in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang province. (AFP)



Alibaba acquisition values meal-deliverer Ele.me at \$9.5 bn

Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba said Monday it was acquiring full ownership of leading food-delivery firm Ele.me in a deal that values the Shanghai-based start-up at \$9.5 billion.

The deal is the latest salvo in the intensifying turf battle between tech heavyweights Alibaba and Tencent in the fast-growing Chinese markets for online food ordering and digital payments.

Alibaba and its financial arm Ant already owned 43 percent of the app-based Ele.me and said in a statement that it would acquire all remaining shares.

It said the takeover puts Ele.me's value at \$9.5 billion. Alibaba did not say how much it was paying for the remaining stake.

Ele.me, which means "Are you hungry?", said it operated in 2,000 Chinese cities and had 260 million users as of mid-2017, employing an army of three million scooter-borne delivery drivers.

The statement by Alibaba, an e-commerce leader through its hugely popular Taobao online shopping platform, implied that it would expand Ele.me's delivery business beyond mere meals.

"Ele.me's fast local delivery service will build on its core expertise in food delivery to provide

consumers with a wider range of products and services on demand," Alibaba said.

"This expansion of offerings will allow Ele.me to efficiently utilise its large delivery force that currently fulfills orders in cities across China."

Ele.me has been competing fiercely with its main rival Meituan, which is backed by Tencent, the Chinese social media, messaging and on-line payments heavyweight.

Users of meal-ordering platforms tripled in two years to 343 million in 2017, the China Internet Network Information Center said. The vast majority use mobile apps. (AFP)

Commerce ministry calls for negotiations

China imposes tariffs of up to 25% on 128 US goods

BEIJING, April 2, (RTRS): China has increased tariffs by up to 25 percent on 128 US products, escalating a dispute between the world's biggest economies in response to US duties on imports of aluminium and steel.

The tariffs, to take effect on Monday, were announced late on Sunday by China's finance ministry and matched a list of possible tariffs on up to \$3 billion in US goods published by China on March 23.

Soon after the announcement, an editorial in the widely read Global Times newspaper warned that if the United States had thought China would not retaliate or would only take symbolic counter-measures, it could "say goodbye to that delusion".

"Even though China and the US have not publicly said they are in a trade war, the sparks of such a war have already started to fly," the newspaper said.

The Ministry of Commerce said it was suspending its obligations to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to reduce tariffs on 120 US goods, including fruit and ethanol. The tariffs on those products will be raised by an extra 15 percent.

Eight other products, would now be subject to additional tariffs of 25 percent, it said, with the measures effective from April 2.

"China's suspension of its tariff concessions is a legitimate action adopted under WTO rules to safeguard China's interests," the finance ministry said.

China is moving swiftly with retaliatory action amid escalating trade tension with the United States, which has rocked global financial markets in the past week as investors fear a full-blown trade dispute between them will damage world growth.

US President Donald Trump is separately preparing to impose tariffs of more than \$50 billion on Chinese goods following an investigation under Section 301 of the 1974 US Trade Act.

The US administration says China has systematically misappropriated American intellectual property - allegations China denies.

About the Section 301 investigation, China had "yet to unsheathe its sword", the official Xinhua news agency said.

Sometime this week, the Trump administration is expected to unveil a list of Chinese goods that could be subjected to new US tariffs.

US technology industry officials said they expected the list to target products that benefit from Beijing's "Made in China 2025" programme, which aims to upgrade the domestic manufacturing base with more advanced products.

China has repeatedly promised to open its economy further, but many foreign companies complain of unfair treatment. China warned the United States on Thursday not to open a Pandora's Box and spark a flurry of protectionist practices across the globe.

"There are some people in the West who think that China looks tough for the sake of a domestic audience, and would easily make concessions," the

China factory activity drops to 4-month low



This photo taken on March 31, 2018 shows a Chinese employee working on a bulldozer at a factory in Zhangjiakou in China's northern Hebei province. Chinese manufacturing activity slowed in March as weak demand weighed on the world's second largest economy, independent data showed on April 2. (AFP)

Weak demand weighs on world's second largest economy

BEIJING, April 2, (AFP): Chinese manufacturing activity slowed in March as weak demand weighed on the world's second largest economy, independent data showed Monday.

The Caixin Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) — an indicator of conditions at small manufacturers — dropped to 51.0 in March, down from 51.6 in February, marking the weakest reading since November.

A PMI figure above 50 represents

growth while anything below points to contraction.

New order growth slowed due to weak foreign demand, and the pace of production level growth slackened, according to a Caixin statement with data compiler IHS Markit.

Inventories of finished items increased marginally while employment dropped.

"Demand was not as strong as expected, leading to lower willingness of manufacturers to produce and restock," Caixin analyst Zhengsheng Zhong wrote.

"The growth momentum of the Chinese manufacturing economy may have

weakened in March, but at a marginal pace."

The government's official PMI reading Saturday of 51.5 beat forecasts, suggesting factory activity expansion quickened in March.

"We suspect that the official PMI, which is skewed toward firms in heavy industry, has benefited from the easing of winter pollution controls," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a research note.

"We tend to put more weight on the Caixin PMI since the index typically does a better job capturing broader cyclical trends in economic activity."

Global Times said.

"But they are wrong."

The Global Times is run by the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily, although its stance does not necessarily reflect government policy.

Reaction to China's measures varied on social media, with some saying

Chinese customers would be the ones to ultimately pay for a trade war.

"Why not directly target soybean and planes? The tariffs that China announced today don't sound a lot to me," said a user on the Weibo microblog platform.

Aircraft and soybeans were China's

biggest US imports by value last year.

In a statement published on Monday morning, the commerce ministry said the United States had "seriously violated" the principles of non-discrimination enshrined in World Trade Organization rules, and had also damaged China's interests.

Stronger yen dents exporter sentiment

Japan business confidence slips in March survey: BoJ

TOKYO, April 2, (AFP): Confidence among Japan's biggest manufacturers has slipped after five quarters of rises, a key central bank survey showed Monday as a stronger yen dented exporter sentiment.

The Bank of Japan's Tankan report — a quarterly survey of about 10,000 companies — showed a reading of 24 among major manufacturers in its March survey against 26 in the December report.

Confidence fell among chemicals, electrical machinery makers and other exporters as the average predicted yen rate for the business year from April appreciated to 109.66 to the dollar in the latest survey from above 110 yen in December.

The sentiment among iron and steelmakers tumbled to 10 from 19 as the US moved to impose hefty tariffs on steel and aluminium imports.

A strong yen is negative for Japanese exporters as it makes their products less competitive abroad and erodes profits when repatriated.

The latest Tankan, however, hardly made economists pessimistic about the world's third largest economy, with the headline index still close to the highest level in over a decade.

Economists argue Japan is on a solid recovery path on the back of a global economic recovery, with investments linked to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics also giving the economy a shot in the arm.

"The yen's appreciation dented corporate confidence temporarily," said IBS economist Takuji Aida.

"But the underlying sentiment is solid, as seen in their plans to accelerate spending on plants and equipment," he said.

"Weak stock prices (since February) have not prevented them from stepping up capital spending," he said.

The index for non-manufacturers also fell to 23 from 25 but Aida said it would also improve going forward, with rises in wages starting to translate into higher consumer spending.

"Readings in the next Tankan will likely turn up," he told AFP.

The Tankan report, the broadest indicator of how Japan Inc is faring, marks the difference between the percentage of firms that are upbeat and those that see conditions as unfavourable.

Due to a triennial reshuffling of companies surveyed, the confidence for the December 2017 quarter was recalculated with the new base in order to make a comparison.

The latest survey came after a batch of solid economic data released on Friday, which showed factory production picked up in February while the jobless rate stayed low.

Japan's economy expanded by 0.4 percent in the last quarter of 2017 as it notched up its longest period of expansion since the "bubble" days of the 1980s.

The stock market kept soaring in January but took a plunge in February on fears that the US central bank will embark on a sharper pace of interest-rate rises than previously expected to head off inflation.



A man talks with a shop assistant at a bargain ticket shop in Tokyo on April 2. A quarterly business outlook survey by Japan's central bank shows corporate sentiment has worsened for the first time in two years. The Bank of Japan's 'tankan' index for large manufacturers, released on Monday, was 24 in March, down two points from December. (AP)

investment funds

| Funds                                   | Fund Manager                                                        | Valuation                              | Valued date | Currency       | Net Asset Value (NAV) | Prev NAV | Prev NAV Dated |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| <b>National Bank of Kuwait</b>          |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
| Money Market Funds                      | Watani KD Money Market Fund II                                      | NBK Capital                            | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | KD                    | 1.039    | 1.038          |
|                                         | Watani USD Money Market Fund                                        | NBK Global Asset Management Co. Ltd.   | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 10.315   | 10.311         |
|                                         | Watani KD Money Market Fund (Acc to Islamic Shariah principles) II  | NBK Global Asset Management Co. Ltd.   | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | KD                    | 1.031    | 1.037          |
|                                         | Watani USD Money Market Fund (Acc to Islamic Shariah principles) II | NBK Global Asset Management Co. Ltd.   | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 10.158   | 10.152         |
|                                         | NBK Kuwait Equity Fund                                              | Watani Investment Co.                  | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | KD                    | 0.663    | 0.664          |
|                                         | Gulf Equity Investment Fund                                         | Watani Investment Co.                  | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 11.940   | 11.869         |
|                                         | Regional Bond and Sukuk Investment Fund                             | NBK Capital                            | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 9.855    | 9.874          |
| <b>Gulf Bank</b>                        |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Al Basha'er GCC Equity Fund                                         | Kwt. Fin. & Inv. Co. & Gulf Fin. House | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | USD                   | 7.071    | 7.246          |
|                                         | Coast Fund                                                          | Coast Investment & Dev. Co.            | Monthly     | Jan 31, 2018   | KD                    | 0.661    | 0.646          |
|                                         | Markaz Real Estate Fund                                             |                                        | Bi-annual   | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.924    | 0.933          |
| <b>Al Ahli Bank</b>                     |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Al Ahli Gulf Fund                                                   | Al Ahli Bank                           | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.924    | 0.933          |
|                                         | Al Ahli Kuwaiti Fund                                                | Al Ahli Bank                           | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2017   | KD                    | 0.849    | 0.847          |
| <b>Burgan Bank</b>                      |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Burgan Equity Fund                                                  | Burgan Bank                            | Monthly     | Dec 31, 2017   | KD                    | 1.842    | 1.117          |
| <b>Boubyan Bank</b>                     |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Boubyan KD Money Market Fund                                        | Boubyan Bank                           | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | KD                    | 1.073    | 1.072          |
|                                         | Boubyan KD Money Market Fund II                                     | Boubyan Bank                           | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | KD                    | 1.021    | 1.020          |
| <b>Boubyan Capital Investment Co.</b>   |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Boubyan USD Liquidity Fund                                          | Boubyan Capital Investment Co          |             | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 10.505   | 10.300         |
|                                         | Boubyan Multi-Asset Holding Fund                                    | Boubyan Bank                           |             | Jan 30, 2018   | USD                   | 10.975   | 10.980         |
| <b>Kuwait Investment Co.</b>            |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
| Local Fund                              | Al Raed Fund                                                        | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | March 15, 2018 | KD                    | 1.049    | 1.052          |
|                                         | Kuwait Investment Fund                                              | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.758    | 0.756          |
|                                         | Al Hilal Fund                                                       | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Monthly     | March 19, 2018 | KD                    | 0.704    | 0.704          |
|                                         | Al Ahsen Fund                                                       | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 1.016    | 1.024          |
| International                           | Global Bond Fund                                                    | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | March 14, 2018 | USD                   | 26.350   | 26.380         |
|                                         | Diversified Fund                                                    | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | March 14, 2018 | USD                   | 21.060   | 20.890         |
|                                         | European Fund                                                       | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2018   | Euro                  | 21.060   | 21.720         |
|                                         | Pacific Equity Fund                                                 | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Weekly      | March 14, 2018 | USD                   | 33.210   | 33.170         |
|                                         | North American Equity Fund                                          | Kuwait Investment Co                   | Tw. Monthly | Feb 28, 2018   | USD                   | 19.540   | 19.610         |
| <b>National Investment Co. (NIC)</b>    |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Al-Wataniya Fund                                                    | NIC                                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.635    | 0.630          |
|                                         | Al-Darji Fund                                                       | NIC                                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.356    | 0.359          |
|                                         | Mawardi Fund                                                        | NIC                                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.463    | 0.471          |
|                                         | Zajli Fund                                                          | NIC                                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.754    | 0.739          |
|                                         | Al Mada Investment Fund                                             | NIC                                    | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2017   | USD                   | 0.785    | 0.768          |
| <b>Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz)</b> |                                                                     |                                        |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                         | Mumtaz Fund                                                         | Kuwait Financial Center                | Weekly      | March 22, 2018 | KD                    | 4.179    | 4.180          |
|                                         | MIDAF                                                               | Kuwait Financial Center                | Weekly      | March 22, 2018 | KD                    | 3.219    | 3.207          |
|                                         | Islamic Fund                                                        | Kuwait Financial Center                | Weekly      | March 22, 2018 | KD                    | 1.580    | 1.586          |
|                                         | FORSA Financial Fund                                                | Kuwait Financial Center                | Monthly     | Dec 31, 2017   | KD                    | 0.987    | 0.996          |
|                                         | Real Estate Fund                                                    | Kuwait Financial Center                | Monthly     | Dec 31, 2017   | KD                    | 1.375    | 1.388          |
|                                         | Markaz Fixed Income Fund                                            | Kuwait Financial Center                | Monthly     | March 22, 2018 | USD                   | 11.630   | 11.630         |
|                                         | Markaz MENA Islamic Fund                                            | Kuwait Financial Center                | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2018   | USD                   | 11.020   | 11.130         |
|                                         | Markaz MENA Islamic Fund                                            | Kuwait Financial Center                | Weekly      | March 15, 2018 | USD                   | 11.280   | 11.020         |

| Funds                                                    | Fund Manager                       | Valuation                    | Valued date | Currency       | Net Asset Value (NAV) | Prev NAV | Prev NAV Dated |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| <b>Kuwait &amp; Middle East Financial &amp; Inv. Co.</b> |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Al Rouyah Fund                     | KMEFIC                       | Monthly     | Nov 30, 2017   | KD                    | 1.359    | 1.487          |
| <b>Global Investment House</b>                           |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
| Index Funds                                              | GCC Large Cap Index Fund           | Global                       | Weekly      | March 15, 2018 | KD                    | 1.257    | 1.251          |
| Equity Funds                                             | Al-Mamnoun Fund A                  | Global                       | Weekly      | March 15, 2018 | KD                    | 0.669    | 0.669          |
|                                                          | Al-Mamnoun Fund B                  | Global                       | Weekly      | March 15, 2018 | KD                    | 0.669    | 0.669          |
|                                                          | GCC Large Cap Fund                 | Global                       | Bi-weekly   | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 153.270  | 148.530        |
|                                                          | GCC Saudi Equity Fund              | Global                       | Bi-weekly   | March 13, 2018 | SAR                   | 241.920  | 230.940        |
| Sectoral Funds                                           | EPADI Fund                         | Global                       | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 104.270  | 98.940         |
| Islamic Funds                                            | Global GCC Islamic Fund            | Global                       | Weekly      | March 13, 2018 | USD                   | 100.470  | 99.040         |
|                                                          | Al-Durra Islamic Fund              | Global                       | Monthly     | March 15, 2018 | KD                    | 1.255    | 1.255          |
| <b>Kuwait Finance &amp; Investment Co (KFIC)</b>         |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Al Wasm Fund                       | KFIC                         | Weekly      | March 14, 2018 | KD                    | 0.422    | 1.359          |
|                                                          | Al Basha'er GCC Equity Fund        | KFIC                         | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | USD                   | 7.671    | 1.359          |
| <b>KAMCO</b>                                             |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | KAMCO Investment Fund              | KAMCO                        | Monthly     | Dec 31, 2017   | KD                    | 1.120    | 1.110          |
|                                                          | KAMCO Real Estate Yield Fund       | KAMCO                        | Monthly     | Jan 31, 2018   | USD                   | 10.060   | 10.090         |
| <b>Wafra International Investment Co.</b>                |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Wafra Equity Fund                  | Wafra Co.                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.929    | 0.917          |
|                                                          | Wafra Bond Fund                    | Wafra Co.                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 1.082    | 1.000          |
|                                                          | Masaref Investment Fund            | ISKAN                        | Weekly      | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.906    | 0.917          |
|                                                          | Fajir Islamic Fund                 | Wafra Co.                    | Monthly     | Feb 28, 2018   | KD                    | 0.705    | 1.000          |
| <b>Al Aman Investment</b>                                |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Al Aman Islamic Fund               | Al Aman Investment           | Weekly      | Dec 30, 2017   | KD                    | 0.316    | 0.315          |
| <b>Tharwa Investment Co.</b>                             |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Tharwa Investment Fund             | Tharwa Investment Co         | Weekly      | Feb 1, 2018    | KD                    | 1.563    | 1.461          |
|                                                          | Tharwa Islamic Fund                | Tharwa Investment Co         | Monthly     | Feb 1, 2018    | KD                    | 0.635    | 0.603          |
| <b>Bank Al-Bilad</b>                                     |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Al Seef Fund                       | Bank Al-Bilad                | Daily       | March 21, 2018 | KD                    | 0.429    | 0.434          |
| <b>Commercial International Bank</b>                     |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | CIB Money Market Fund (Osoul)      | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | April 1, 2018  | EGP                   | 324.860  | 323.950        |
|                                                          | CIB II Equity (Istithmar)          | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | March 29, 2018 | EGP                   | 222.340  | 222.540        |
|                                                          | CIB and Faisal Islamic Al Aman     | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | March 29, 2018 | EGP                   | 116.750  | 117.090        |
|                                                          | Hemaya                             | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | April 1, 2018  | EGP                   | 209.650  | 204.890        |
|                                                          | Thabat                             | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | April 1, 2018  | EGP                   | 207.460  | 206.890        |
|                                                          | Takamol                            | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | April 1, 2018  | EGP                   | 190.750  | 188.120        |
|                                                          | Misr El Mostakbel                  | CI Asset Management          | Weekly      | April 1, 2018  | EGP                   | 31.010   | 29.980         |
| <b>KFH Capital</b>                                       |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Muthanna Islamic Index Fund (MUDX) | KFH Capital Investment Co    | Daily       | Feb 24, 2018   | KD                    | 0.379    | 0.374          |
|                                                          | Muthanna GCC Islamic banks Fund    | KFH Capital Investment Co    | Daily       | Feb 24, 2018   | KD                    | 0.693    | 0.669          |
|                                                          | Bataik GCC Islamic                 | KFH Capital Investment Co    | Weekly      | June 29, 2017  | KD                    | 0.930    | 0.916          |
| <b>Noor Financial Investment Co.</b>                     |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | Noor Islamic Fund                  | Noor Financial Investment Co | Monthly     | Nov 30, 2016   | KD                    | 0.374    | 0.405          |
| <b>CapCorp Investment Co.</b>                            |                                    |                              |             |                |                       |          |                |
|                                                          | CapCorp Local Fund                 | CapCorp Investment Company   | Weekly      | Sept 28, 2017  | KD                    | 1.000    | 0.991          |