

Korean Air sells stake in CSA

South Korean flagship carrier Korean Air and the Czech government sold their stakes in Czech Airlines (CSA) to Czech company Travel Service on Tuesday...

Name: Kuwait Sharia

Compatible Indices

Providers: Al Madar Finance & Investment Co.

Description: Index of Sharia compatible companies traded on the KSE

Website: www.almadar-fi.com

Table with 12 columns: Index name, Bloomberg ticker, Today's value as of, Today's closing value, Prev closing value, % change, 1-week change, 3-month change, YTD change, 12-month change, 24-month change.

Index driven higher by strong expectation that jobs will remain plentiful in near-term

US consumer confidence soars to 17-year record

WASHINGTON, Feb 27, (AFP): US consumer confidence leapt to a 17-year record in February, driven higher by strong expectations that jobs will remain plentiful in the near-term...

Consumers' outlook about the future was also rosier, with more expecting their incomes to rise in the coming months, according to the Conference Board.

The results could point to strong consumer spending in the early months of 2018, helping support continued GDP expansion.

The consumer confidence index jumped more than six points to 130.8, its highest level since November of 2000, well beyond analyst expectations...

"Despite the recent stock market volatility, consumers expressed greater optimism about short-term prospects for business and labor market conditions, as well as their financial prospects," Lynn Franco, the Conference Board's head of economic indicators, said in a statement.

"Overall, consumers remain quite confident that the economy will continue expanding at a strong pace in the months ahead."

Survey

The share of survey respondents saying business conditions were "bad" fell 2.2 percentage points to 10.8 percent, while those saying jobs were "plentiful" jumped 2.2 points to 39.4 percent.

Consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months gained 4.3 points to reach 25.8 percent and those expecting higher incomes in the months ahead rose to 23.8 percent, up 3.2 percentage points.

With US unemployment at historic lows and expected to fall further, employers are struggling to fill open positions and some are beginning to increase wages.

Corporations have also attracted publicity by announcing employee bonuses tied to December's sweeping corporate tax cuts. Economists however warn this does not mean workers will primarily benefit.

Ian Shepherson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said changes in consumer confidence often lagged behind movements on Wall Street, meaning this month's selloff on stock markets may not yet be reflected in the index.

Still, the readings "appear consistent with rocketing consumers' spending," he said in a research note.

Shepherson however noted that, with incomes growing only two percent on an annual basis and savings at record lows, "the 4.5 percent growth in spending apparently signaled by the confidence numbers just can't happen."

IMF chief sees global growth reaching 3.9% in 2018 & 2019

ASEAN countries need to embrace new growth models

Expansionary budget expected

Hong Kong's 2018 GDP growth seen moderating

HONG KONG, Feb 27, (RTRS): Strong consumption, as well as frothy stock and real estate markets likely bolstered Hong Kong's economic growth in the fourth quarter, but higher US interest rates and easing China capital inflows may pose broader risks to growth this year.

With the economy showing signs of moderation, the government will probably announce short-term relief measures and capital spending initiatives to sustain growth in an expansionary budget on Wednesday, local media reported.

As one of the most open and free economies in the world, Hong Kong's growth is highly reliant on capital, trade, tourist and investment flows from China. A surge in domestic spending, a rise in visitors from the mainland and improved retail spending helped ramp up GDP last year after a difficult 2016.

"We think private consumption is likely to remain resilient on the back of stable growth," wrote HSBC economist Kelvin Lam. "More specifically, the retail sector, one of four main pillars of the Hong Kong economy, will likely continue to be supported by the recovery in tourist arrivals and stable domestic demand."

Six economists surveyed by Reuters expected fourth quarter growth of 3.2 percent from a year earlier, down from 3.6 percent in the July-September quarter. The economists did not provide quarterly forecasts. The third quarter expanded a seasonally adjusted 0.5 percent.

The still-solid momentum in the final quarter will bring full-year growth to an estimated 3.7 percent - the fastest since 2011 - and up from 1.9 percent growth in 2016.

The former British colony has seen brighter economic data in the past few months as buoyant markets helped boost consumer spending, prompting the government to raise its full-year growth outlook to 3.7 percent late last

year. Economists forecast the financial hub's growth to ease in 2018 to 3.1 percent. GDP figures are due at 0300 GMT on Wednesday, along with the budget for the 2018/19 financial year.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan is expected to unveil a more expansionary budget on a bumper fiscal surplus of more than HK\$160 billion (\$20.45 billion), according to global consultancy EY.

While Chan may resist calls for short-term sweeteners such as cash handouts, local media say he will focus on livelihood challenges including a widening wealth gap and improved medical support for the elderly.

He will also seek to help innovative and creative industries through tax incentives, a start-up fund and investments in sectors such as artificial intelligence, fintech and biomedical science, with the city seen lagging far behind rivals like the southern China tech hub of Shenzhen, and Singapore, reports say.

With the current bumper surplus, the city's fiscal reserves have now swelled to around HK\$1 trillion (\$127.8 billion), according to EY.

"The combination of two-tier profits tax rates regime, short-term relief measures and capital spending initiatives would likely boost 2018 GDP," Nomura analysts Young Sun Kwon and Minoru Nogimori wrote in a research report.

Hong Kong has hovered near full employment with a jobless rate of 2.9 percent in December, the lowest level in nearly two decades since the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

The property sector, however, is seen by analysts as a potential risk as US interest rates trend higher and weigh on mortgage payments and household consumption.

Hong Kong's home prices have surged for 14 straight months, further exacerbating public discontent towards housing affordability in the city of 7.4 million.

JAKARTA, Feb 27, (RTRS): International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde said on Tuesday the global economy was showing broad-based growth, but the landscape was shifting with heightened risks of trade disputes, monetary policy normalisation and technological change.

Lagarde, speaking to an IMF conference in Jakarta in preparation for the Fund's annual meetings in Bali in October, said the IMF was expecting global growth to reach 3.9 percent in 2018 and 2019. This is unchanged from the IMF's forecast in January and up from 3.7 percent in 2017.

She said ASEAN countries were preparing for higher interest rates in advanced economies such as the United States and Europe, but cautioned that policymakers need to stay vigilant about its effect on financial stability and volatile capital flows.

"We know this will have spillover effects across the world. We have known for some time that it's coming," Lagarde said. "It remains uncertain how this transition is going to affect other countries, companies, jobs, incomes."

ASEAN countries need to embrace new growth models that put a greater emphasis on domestic demand, regional trade and economic diversification and prepare for technological changes such as increased factory automation, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, new financial technologies and digital currencies.

While these could eliminate some jobs, it was important for countries to boost efforts to educate workers to better prepare them to take advantage of new technologies.

"Many jobs will be affected one way or another. Some of them will disappear, but many more will be affected because of automation. So we need to think about the future of work," Lagarde said, adding that there was no single approach, and many countries will forge their own path.

HNA to lead funds worth \$3.2b for investments

AIIB OKs \$1.5bn in loans to India for 'infra' projects

NEW DELHI, Feb 27, (RTRS): Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved \$1.5 billion in loans to India for infrastructure-related projects in 2018, a senior official of the AIIB said on Tuesday.

China plans to invest more than \$100 billion through its Belt and Road scheme to build highways, rail lines, ports and other infrastructure linking Asia, Europe and Africa.

The funds would be used for investment in India's energy, roads and urban development projects, and the bank will examine allotting more funds for such projects next year, D.J. Pandian, AIIB's chief investment officer, said.

Investment

AIIB's loans include a \$200 million commitment to India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund to spend on roads, housing and urban development, and the bank will let the Indian government decide how to use that money.

Energy-related projects will primarily be focused on renewables, Pandian said, without providing additional details.

China-backed lenders are taking a more hands-off approach to overseas development financing, unlike western banks whose financing often comes with social and environ-

mental strings and strengthens the voice of non-profits.

AIIB wants to encourage the transition to renewable energy but is not against investments in coal-related projects, unlike most of its peers who have campaigned against further investments in coal.

Any foreign investment in renewables is crucial for India, which needs at least \$125 billion in investments to complete its ambitious target of adding 175 GW in clean energy by the end of 2022.

Also:

HONG KONG: Chinese conglomerate HNA Group's unit HNA Capital said it will lead two funds totaling 20 billion yuan (\$3.17 billion) that will focus on investments linked to the ambitious Belt and Road initiative of the world's second-largest economy.

Through these two funds, HNA Group's financial arm will prioritise projects in the infrastructure, financial services and high technology sectors across Greater China and Southeast Asia, it said in a statement on Tuesday.

The company did not provide any other key details about the two funds, including how much it will invest in the funds or whether other investors would participate in them.

Comcast seeks to outfox Fox with 'higher' Sky bid

LONDON Feb 27, (AFP): US cable giant Comcast joined in the battle for pan-European satellite TV group Sky on Tuesday, outbidding Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox, whose takeover ambitions have hit UK government resistance.

In a surprise announcement before the London stock market opened, Comcast presented an informal all-cash offer of £12.50 per share for Sky, or more than £22 billion (\$31 billion, 25 billion euros) overall.

That is substantially more than the £10.75 per share or £11.4 billion that Fox has offered for the 61 percent of Sky it does not already own.

The announcement — and the prospect of a bidding war — sent Sky's

share price soaring 21 percent on the London Stock Exchange.

"We would like to own the whole of Sky and we will be looking to acquire over 50 percent of the Sky shares," said Comcast chief executive and chairman Brian L. Roberts.

"We are confident that we will be able to receive the necessary regulatory approvals."

In a brief response, Sky advised shareholders to take no action in the absence of a formal bid.

Analysts meanwhile eyed even higher offers.

"Sky is a prized asset for Murdoch so this could quickly escalate into a bidding war," said London Capital Group analyst Jasper Lawler.

investment funds

Table with columns: Funds, Fund Manager, Valuation, Valued date, Currency, Net Asset Value (NAV), Prev NAV, Prev NAV Dated. Includes sub-sections for National Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank, Al Ahli Bank, Burgan Bank, Boubyan Bank, Boubyan Capital Investment Co., Kuwait Investment Co., National Investment Co. (NIC), and Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz).

Table with columns: Funds, Fund Manager, Valuation, Valued date, Currency, Net Asset Value (NAV), Prev NAV, Prev NAV Dated. Includes sub-sections for Kuwait & Middle East Financial & Inv. Co., Global Investment House, Kuwait Finance & Investment Co (KFIC), KAMCO, Wafra International Investment Co., AI Aman Investment, Tharwa Investment Co., Bank Al-Bilad, Commercial International Bank, KFH Capital Investment Co., and Noor Financial Investment Co.