

Luckin rises in US stock debut

Shares of Luckin Coffee, a fast-growing rival to Starbucks in China, rose 20% in their US stock market debut Friday.

Most of Luckin's stores are small, have few seats and are used mainly as a place to pick up mobile orders. It also offers delivery in 30 minutes and promises a refund for delays or spilled drinks.

Swiss voters approve tax and pension overhaul

Voters in Switzerland approved on Sunday a shake-up of the corporate tax system, heading off what its finance minister had called an existential threat to the country's role as a business hub.

ceptance was vital to prevent the country being branded a low-tax parish, Finance Minister Ueli Maurer has said. Two years ago, under the Swiss system of direct democracy, voters rejected an attempt to overhaul the tax system, which critics say gives the country an unfair advantage in attracting global companies.

to meet international standards and eliminate special low tax rates that benefit around 24,000 foreign companies based in Switzerland. The government plans to scrap special tax status for these companies that pay corporate rates in individual cantons as low as 7.8% to 12%, compared with 12% to 24% for "normal" Swiss companies.

Move to help existing customers

US may scale back trade restrictions on Huawei

WASHINGTON, May 19, (RTRS): The US Commerce Department said on Friday it may soon scale back restrictions on Huawei Technologies after this week's blacklisting would have made it nearly impossible for the Chinese company to service its existing customers.

ately respond to a request for comment. Out of \$70 billion Huawei spent buying components in 2018, some \$11 billion went to US firms including Qualcomm, Intel Corp and Micron Technology Inc.

The Commerce Department, which had effectively halted Huawei's ability to buy American-made parts and components, is considering issuing a temporary general license to "prevent the interruption of existing network operations and equipment," a spokeswoman said.

If the Commerce Department issues the license, US suppliers would still need separate licenses to conduct new business with Huawei, which would be extremely difficult to obtain, the spokeswoman said.

Potential beneficiaries of the license could, for example, include internet access and mobile phone service providers in thinly populated places such as Wyoming and eastern Oregon that purchased network equipment from Huawei in recent years.

The temporary general license would last for 90 days, she said, and would be posted in the Federal Register, just as the rule adding Huawei to the entity list will be published in the government publication on Tuesday.

In effect, the Commerce Department would allow Huawei to purchase US goods so it can help existing customers maintain the reliability of networks and equipment, but the Chinese firm still would not be allowed to buy American parts and components to manufacture new products.

The goal is to prevent collateral harm on non-Huawei entities that use their equipment," said Washington lawyer Kevin Wolf, a former Commerce Department official.

The blacklisting, officially known as placing Huawei on the Commerce Department's entity list, was one of two efforts by the Trump administration this week allegedly made in an attempt to thwart national security risks. In an executive order, President Donald Trump also effectively barred the use of its equipment in US telecom networks.

The entity list identifies companies believed to be involved in activities contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States. In a final rule posted on Thursday, the government tied Huawei's entity listing to a criminal case pending against the company in Brooklyn, New York. US prosecutors unsealed the indictment in January accusing the company of engaging in bank fraud to obtain embargoed US goods and services in Iran and to move money out of the country via the international banking system.

The United States believes Huawei's smartphones and network equipment could be used by China to spy on Americans, allegations the company has repeatedly denied.

Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou, daughter of the company's founder, was arrested in Canada in December in connection with the indictment, a move that has led to a three-way diplomatic crisis involving the US, China and Canada.

The latest Commerce move comes as China has struck a more aggressive tone in its trade war with the United States, suggesting talks between the world's two largest economies would be meaningless unless Washington changed course.

Meng, who was released on bail, remains in Vancouver, and is fighting extradition. She has maintained her innocence, and Huawei has entered a plea of not guilty in New York. Trump injected other considerations into the criminal case after Meng's arrest when he told Reuters he would intervene if it helped close a trade deal.

A spokesman for Huawei, the world's largest telecommunications equipment maker, did not immedi-



In this file photo, an information board for employees' shuttle bus is on display near the Huawei office building at its research and development centre in Dongguan in south China's Guangdong province. (AP)

Kuwait skids amid regional jitters

National Bank of Kuwait sheds 15 fils, UPAC sprints ahead

KUWAIT CITY, May 19: Kuwait stocks sank into red on Sunday extending previous week's pullback. The All Shares Index slid 73.18 points in a broad decline led by blue chips to 5,575.99 pts tracking the Gulf markets which continues to be roiled by the regional tensions.

The Premier Market tumbled 103.04 points to 6,004.84 pts taking the month's losses to 63 points while Main Market slipped 11.64 pts to 4,749.88 points. The volume turnover meanwhile hit a two-week low following last session's surge. Over 84 million shares changed hands - down 37 pct from Thursday.

Among the prominent losers, National Bank of Kuwait skidded 15 fils to 946 fils partly paring last session's losses and Boubyan Bank dipped 14 fils to 551 fils. Human-soft Holding reversed Thursday's gains with 40 fils drop to KD 3.400 while Kuwait National Cinema Co was down 30 fils at KD 0.840.

Zain slipped 10 fils to 476 fils after trading 2.6 million shares and Ooredoo gave up 7 fils before winding up at 668 fils. Kuwait Telecommunications Co (VIVA) dialed down 2 fils extending last session's losses while Agility dropped 16 fils to 719 fils after trading over 1 million shares.

The market opened on dull note and headed south in early trade the main index continued to drift lower as sentiment remained weak and plumbled the day's lowest level of 5,558 points in the final minutes. It however slightly pared back its losses at close.

Gainer

Top gainer of the day, Al Aqaria soared 32 pct to 30 fils and Warba Insurance climbed 9.2 pct to stand next. Taame skidded 15.19 pct, the steepest decliner of the day and Gulf Bank topped the volume with over 8.9 million shares.

National Industries Group fell 3 fils to 227 fils after trading 3.5 million shares and Mezzan Holding dialed down 2 fils before settling at 540 fils. Boubyan Petrochemical Co slid 2 fils to 551 fils and Al Qurain Petrochemical Co clipped 2 fils. Integrated Holding Co was flat at 550 fils.

Jazeera Airways dipped 20 fils to 860 fils and ALAFCO stood pat at 259 fils off early lows. Mashaer Holding and SPEC trimmed 0.9 fil each to close at 63.1 fils and 70 fils respectively whereas Fujairah Cement Co gave up 4.5 fils to close at 48.5 fils.

Kuwait Portland Cement rose 5 fils to KD 1.235 partly recouping Thursday's losses and Hilal Cement was down 10 fils at 125 fils. Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Co slipped 9 fils to 403 fils after trading over 1 million shares and Gulf Cable gave up 4 fils to close at 372 fils.

Combined Group Contracting Co dropped 16 fils to 210 fils and



Trader Gregory Rowe, (left), and specialist James Denaro work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, May 14. Stocks were rattled by escalation in US-China trade war during the week. (AP)

Gulf markets mixed

Dubai ends lower on property, banking

DUBAI, May 19, (RTRS): Dubai's stock market closed down on Sunday, dragged lower by property and banking shares as Gulf markets ended the day mixed amid rising geopolitical tensions that have shaken investor confidence. Dubai's main index fell 2.2%, led by a 3.1% decline in heavyweight Emaar Properties and a 2.3% drop in bank Emirates NBD. Dubai Islamic Bank fell 1.6%. DAMAC Properties, which on May 15 reported its smallest profit since going public in 2015, shed 3.0%, recovering some earlier losses. Arabtec Construction shares closed at a limit down of 10% after it reported a halving in first-quarter profit last week and the departure of its chief executive. Gulf markets have been shaky since the United Arab Emirates said four vessels had been "sabotaged" off its Fujairah coast on May 12 and Saudi Arabia blamed Yemen's Houthis' for a drone attack on oil facilities in the kingdom on May 14. Saudi Arabia's main index fell 1.1% after ending the previous week with three days of consecutive gains. A senior Saudi official said on Sunday the country wanted to avert war but was ready to respond

with "all strength and determination". Al Rajhi Bank fell 1.1%, Saudi Basic Industries (SABIC) fell by 2.3%, and Jabal Omar lost 3.6%. Riyadh Bank gained 1.8%. MSCI said on May 13 it would include MSCI Saudi Arabia in its emerging markets index, effective May 28, a move that could draw billions of dollars into the market. MSCI said 30 Saudi Arabian securities would be added, representing an aggregate weight of 1.42% in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index. Abu Dhabi's index rose 0.3%, recovering from early losses in the session. The bourse was supported by a 0.7% gain in First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and 1.0% rise in telecom Etisalat. FAB, the United Arab Emirates' largest lender, had fallen in recent sessions after MSCI decided to maintain its foreign inclusion factor at 25%, despite a recent increase in the foreign ownership limit to 40% from 25%. Qatar's index was flat as most shares ended lower, offsetting Mesaieed Petrochemical's 4.5% rise and Qatar Insurance Co's 1.3% gain. Mesaieed has been rising since it was added to the MSCI index earlier this week. Qatar National Bank, the re-

gion's biggest lender, lost 0.3%.

Saudi Arabia

The index fell 1.1% to 8,525 points

Abu Dhabi

The index rose 0.3% to 4,733 points

Dubai

The index fell 2.1% to 2,519 points

Qatar

The index was flat at 9,873 points

Egypt

The index fell 1% to 13,521 points

Bahrain

The index was flat at 1,398 points

Oman

1 points

Kuwait

The index fell 1.7% to 6,005 points

NAPESCO was down 17 fils at 973 fils. ACICO Industries and Independent Petroleum Group dialed down 1 fil each while Equipment Holding fell 2.9 fils to 23.4 fils. AAN eased 1.6 fils to 10.6 fils.

Automated Systems Co ticked 0.1 fil up to 96.4 fils with thin trading whereas OSOS took 2 fils to close at 102 fils. KCPC added 5 fils and KPPC closed 2.9 fils lower at 56 fils. Salbook Trading gave up 2.5 fils before ending at 44 fils.

UPAC sprinted 20 fils to 425 fils

and Warbacap slipped 5 fils to 80 fils. Al Rai Media Group slipped 4.5 fils to 41.4 fils and Gulf Petroleum Investment Co trimmed 1.3 fils. KGL Logistics gave up 1.3 fils before settling at 40.1 fils.

In the banking sector, Gulf Bank fell 3 fils to 299 fils after trading 8.9 million shares and Kuwait International Bank was down 5 fils at 255 fils with a volume of 4.5 million shares. Burgan Bank shed 13 fils and has retreated 21 fils so far during the month.

Commercial Bank rallied 22 fils to 537 fils and Al Mutahed gave up 6 fils before closing at 293 fils. Warba Bank slipped 6 fils to 225 fils after trading 2.4 million shares and Ahli United Bank closed 3 fils in red with brisk trading.

KIPCO eased 1 fil to 211 fils and Gulf Finance House trimmed 1.2 fils to close at 67.9 fils. Kuwait Investment Co tripped 1 fil and National Investment Co followed suit to wind up at 112 fils after trading over 1 million shares. FACIL closed 3 fils in red at 204 fils.

exchange rates - May 19

Table of exchange rates for various currencies including US dollar, Sterling pound, Euro, Japanese yen, Swiss franc, Canadian dollar, Swedish krona, Saudi riyal, UAE dirham, Bahraini dinar, Omani riyal, Danish krone, Indian rupee, Pakistani rupee, Sri Lankan rupee, Bangladesh taka, Philippine peso, Australian dollar, Hong Kong dollar, Singapore dollar, Jordanian dinar, Egyptian pound, Cyprus pound, Yemeni riyal, Thai baht, South African rand, Korean won, Syrian pound, Iranian Riyal, Lebanese pound, Malaysian ringgit, Indonesian rupiah, New Zealand dollar, and local gold.