

# Kuwait Times BUSINESS

US crude stocks plunge  
as tankers delay arrival

16

Turkish growth slows to  
3.1% in second quarter

17

French govt moves to cut  
taxes as election nears

19

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2016



Greece urged to speed up  
reforms to get bailout cash

18



ATHENS: (L-R) Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, France's President Francois Hollande, Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Cyprus' President Nicos Anastasiades, Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa and Spain's State Secretary for European Union (EU) Fernando Eguidazu pose for a photo during the EU MED Mediterranean Economies Summit in Athens yesterday. — AFP

## MASTERCARD SUED FOR \$19BN IN DAMAGES

### 46 MILLION BRITONS COULD EACH GET MORE THAN 300 POUNDS

LONDON: Some 46 million people in Britain could potentially benefit from a legal case brought against Mastercard demanding 14 billion pounds (\$19 billion) in damages for allegedly charging excessive fees, according to court documents filed in London. The case brought by a former chief financial services ombudsman alleges the payments company charged unlawfully high fees to stores when shoppers swiped their debit or credit cards and these were passed on to consumers in higher prices. Mastercard is alleged to have done this for 16 years between 1992 and 2008, in more than 600 pages of documents filed at the Competition Appeal Tribunal on Thursday.

"This was almost an invisible tax," Walter Merricks, who is bringing the case, told the BBC. "Mastercard has behaved disgracefully in this. They have not had the reasonableness to accept that what this was doing was damaging UK consumers."

Mastercard said in a statement it denied any wrongdoing. "We continue to firmly disagree with the basis of this claim and we intend to oppose it vigorously," the world's second-largest payments network said.

The lawsuit comes after the European Union's antitrust regulator found in 2014 Mastercard's fees to store owners to process international payments within the EU were excessive.

Law firm Quinn Emanuel said the lawsuit was the largest damages claim in British history and would be brought under a



LONDON: A detail of a Mastercard credit card showing the logo of the card in London yesterday. — AP

law meaning consumers would automatically be claimants unless they opt out. Any person living in Britain who used a credit card, cash or cheques and was over 16 years old in the period covered by the lawsuit will automatically be part of the claim.

If the 14 billion pound claim was shared equally between the number of eligible claimants, each person could receive more than 300 pounds each, according to a Reuters' calculation. A lawyer working on the case said Mastercard charged shops fees in excess of 1 percent for card use on international transactions between 1992 and 2008.

Although the EU's anti-trust regulator only ruled Mastercard's international fees were illegal, this impacted British consumers as it was the default fee used in Britain. Two years ago, the European Union capped the fees retailers pay at 0.2 percent for debit cards and 0.3 percent for credit cards.

Merricks in a statement said the case is a watershed moment for consumer compensation in Britain. Merricks was head of Britain's financial services ombudsmen for ten years until 2009, helping to settle disputes between consumers and financial services companies.

Britain's banks have been caught in a range of mis-selling cases in the last five years. They have paid 24 billion pounds in compensation for mis-selling loan payment insurance, making it Britain's costliest scandal in financial services. Consumers no longer living in Britain, but who lived in the country between 1992 and 2008, can opt in to the collective claim against Mastercard. Any hearing on the case is not expected until early 2018, unless MasterCard settle it out of court. — Reuters