

Europe threatens digital taxes without global deal, after US quits talks

REUTERS, Paris/Brussels

France said a US decision to quit global talks on how to tax big digital firms such as Google, Amazon and Facebook was a "provocation" and the European Union said it could impose taxes even if no deal was reached by year-end.

The latest transatlantic trade row was ignited after the Washington said on Wednesday it was withdrawing from negotiations with European countries over new international tax rules on digital firms, saying talks had made no progress.

Nearly 140 countries are involved in the talks organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the first major rewrite of global tax rules in a generation to bring them up to date for the digital era.

The talks aim to reach a deal by the end of 2020, but that deadline is now slipping out of reach with Washington's latest move and the US presidential election in November.

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said France, Britain, Italy and Spain had jointly responded on Thursday to a letter from US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announcing the pullout.

"This letter is a provocation. It's a provocation towards all the partners at the OECD when we were centimetres away from a deal on the taxation of digital giants," Le Maire said on France Inter radio.

A Spanish government spokeswoman said Madrid and other European countries would not accept "any type of threat from another country" over the digital tax dispute.

European countries says tech firms pay too little tax in countries where they do business because they can shift profits around the globe with little physical infrastructure. Washington has resisted any new unilateral taxes on Silicon Valley companies in the absence of an OECD deal.

"The European Commission wants a global solution to bring corporate taxation into the 21st century," European Economic



Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire

Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said.

"But if that proves impossible this year, we have been clear that we will come forward with a new proposal at EU level," he said, saying taxes could be introduced even without a global deal.

France, one of several European countries which has enacted new taxes to collect more revenue from digital companies, had agreed to suspend collection of its levy while talks were under way on a global approach.

Le Maire said France would impose its digital services tax this year, whether or not Washington returned to negotiations.

"No one can accept that the digital giants can make profits from their 450 million European clients and not pay taxes where they are," he said.

The French tax applies a 3 per cent levy on revenue from digital services earned in France by companies with revenues of more than 25 million euros (\$28 million) in France and 750 million euros worldwide.

Washington has threatened to impose trade tariffs on French Champagne, handbags and other goods in response.

The United States opened trade investigations this month into digital taxes in Britain, Italy, Spain and other countries over concerns that they unfairly target US companies.

President Donald Trump threatened this month to impose tariffs on EU cars if the bloc did not drop its tariff on American lobsters.

Gold firms as new virus cases cast shadow over economic recovery hopes

REUTERS

Gold prices rose on Thursday, as fears that new coronavirus cases could impede economic recovery bolstered demand for the precious metal and weighed on riskier assets.

Spot gold was up 0.3 per cent at \$1,731.88 per ounce by 0933 GMT, having earlier hit a near one-week high of \$1,736.49. US gold futures rose 0.5 per cent to \$1,744.80 per ounce.

Gold, seen as a safe asset during times of economic turmoil, continues to be supported by persistent concerns over the state of the global economy, said FXCM market analyst Han Tan.

"Investors are currently dealing with competing narratives, between the risks of a second wave and the optimism surrounding the post-pandemic recovery," Tan said.

Once markets get more clarity that should determine bullion's path outside of the \$1,660-\$1,750 range, he said.

The imposition of travel curbs in Beijing to stop a new outbreak of coronavirus in the Chinese capital and surging new infections in several US states have marred hopes of a swift global economic recovery, pressuring stock markets.

Investors now await a Bank of England meeting, where policymakers are expected to expand quantitative easing, and US weekly jobless claims data, due later on Thursday, for further clues on the global economic outlook.

India's rice output could hit record as farmers expand area

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's rice production is likely to surge to a record high as farmers are expanding the area under paddy because of good monsoon rains and after the government raised the price at which it will buy the new-season crop.

Higher output by the world's biggest rice exporter could dampen domestic prices and make exports

more competitive, compensating for lower supplies from rivals Thailand and Vietnam. It could also force India's state-run agencies to ramp up purchases from farmers even as inventories are bulging.

"Farmers are interested in rice. They are likely to expand area due to government support. In the new marketing year, we could produce as much as 120 million tonnes," said

B.V. Krishna Rao, president of India's Rice Exporters Association.

The government raised the price at which it will buy new-season rice from farmers by 2.9 per cent. India, which produced a record 117.94 million tonnes of rice in 2019/20, has started planting the summer-sown crop as the monsoon has spread to main rice-growing areas in the south and east.

The good monsoon rain and rising exports due to a rally in global prices have been encouraging Indian farmers to plant more rice, said Nitin Gupta, vice president for Olam India's rice business.

Rice prices in Thailand and Vietnam, the second and third biggest exporter of the grain respectively, hit multi-year highs this year due to limited supplies. Unlike its competitors, India has a massive surplus for export and it will get bigger in the new season, Gupta said.

State-run agencies were holding 27.4 million tonnes of rice and another 21 million tonnes of unmilled paddy, according to the state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI).

But another record harvest could dampen domestic prices and force the FCI to buy nearly half of the output from farmers, said Rao.



REUTERS/FILE

Farmers plant saplings in a rice field on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, India.

PepsiCo drops Aunt Jemima branding; Uncle Ben's, others under review

REUTERS

PepsiCo Inc said on Wednesday it will change the name and brand image of its Aunt Jemima pancake mix and syrup which have been criticized as racist amid a national debate over racial inequality in the United States.

The more than 130-year-old brand logo features an African-American woman named after a character in 19th-century minstrel shows and is rooted in a stereotype of a friendly black woman working as a servant or nanny for a white family.

Following PepsiCo's move, the makers of Uncle Ben's rice, owned by Mars Inc, Mrs. Butterworth's syrup, owned by ConAgra Brands Inc and Cream of Wheat porridge, owned by

B&G Foods Inc, also said they would review their packaging.

The moves are part of Corporate America's reckoning with the treatment of African Americans amid weeks of protests over racism and police brutality after the death of George Floyd, a black man, in police custody in Minneapolis.

The Aunt Jemima brand had been called out in recent days on social media. A TikTok video called "How To Make A Non Racist Breakfast" by user @singkirby, in which a woman pours the pancake mix down the sink, has received 175,000 views on Instagram since being posted on Tuesday.

"We recognize Aunt Jemima's origins are based on a racial stereotype," Kristin Kroepfl, vice

president and chief marketing officer of PepsiCo-owned Quaker Foods North America, said in a statement.

Quaker did not announce a brand name or logo, but said packages without the Aunt Jemima image would appear in the fourth quarter of this year.

ConAgra said its packaging, meant to evoke a "loving grandmother", could be interpreted "in a way that is wholly inconsistent with our values" and that it has "begun a complete brand and packaging review on Mrs. Butterworth's".

Mars said it had "a responsibility to take a stand in helping to put an end to racial bias and injustices" and that "one way we can do this is by evolving the Uncle Ben's brand, including its visual brand identity."

Subsidy spending climbs for crisis-related expenditure

FROM PAGE B1

The government has allocated Tk 9,500 crore for the agriculture sector for fiscal 2020-21, up 16.85 per cent from Tk 8,130 crore of the revised budget to maintain the growth in farm production and ensure food security.

Usually, agriculture subsidy spending hovers around Tk 6,000 crore every year and this may go up to Tk 7,000 crore this fiscal year.

As much as Tk 200 crore has been allocated as incentives for farm mechanisation.

Besides, the government has raised the target for government procurement and distribution of rice and paddy by 2 lakh tonnes in fiscal 2020-21 to ensure that farmers get a fair price for their produce while at the same time the retail market price of rice remains stable, said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in his budget speech on June 11.

The agriculture sector needs to ensure proper utilisation of subsidy in fiscal 2020-21, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue on June 7.

Despite the allocation of Tk 9,000 crore in successive budgets over the last three years, a significant part of the sum remained unutilised.

In fiscal 2015-16 Tk 2,570 crore was unused, in fiscal 2016-17 Tk 5,390

crore was left idle and in fiscal 2017-18 Tk 3,800 crore, the think-tank said.

Despite the collapse in economic activities at home and abroad owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the government has kept unchanged the subsidy allocation for export and remittance -- the two major sources of external financing for Bangladesh -- at Tk 6,825 crore and Tk 3,060 crore for fiscal 2020-21.

The subsidy for the power sector was trimmed from Tk 9,500 crore to Tk 9,000 crore and that of liquefied natural gas imports from Tk 9,000 crore to Tk 8,500 crore.

Bangladesh has deferred two LNG cargoes as a nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic dented domestic demand for natural gas.

Both the cargoes were bound to supply LNG in May from Qatar's QatarGas, Md Kamruzzaman, managing director of state-run Ruptarita Prakritik Gas Company, told S&P Global Platts, a provider of information, benchmark prices and analytics for the energy and commodities markets.

Both cargoes have been re-scheduled for later in the year -- one of them will supply LNG in September and another in December -- when domestic demand is expected to grow, he said.

Food subsidies rose 26.25 per cent to Tk 6,166 crore, from Tk 4,884 crore.

The subsidy spending for providing food has been increased as the country's expenditure to feed the poor has increased sharply because of the coronavirus-induced shutdown, which has put a brake on the economic activities leaving people with no work.

More subsidies have to be given in the next fiscal year compared with previous years and the increase in subsidies for the priority sectors such as agriculture, food and interest rate is understandable, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, a think-tank.

"But \$6.5 billion in subsidy spending is not a small amount. We have to think about the sector. We can't give such large allocations inefficiently. We have to bring it down gradually," he told The Daily Star recently.

The Tk 5,000 crore earmarked as interest subsidies is a token amount but still desirable as the funds are being channelled for economic recovery.

Remittance and export subsidies are unnecessary and these could be extended by depreciating the exchange rate to some extent, Mansur added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Directorate General of Family Planning
Logistics & Supply Unit
6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215

Invitation for Tenders (Goods) (Re tender)

1	Ministry/Division	Medical Education & Family Welfare Division			
2	Agency	Directorate General of Family Planning			
3	Procuring Entity Name	Director (Logistics and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management)			
4	Procuring Entity Code	Not used at present			
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka			
6	Invitation for	Procurement of NSV Kit, Tubectomy Kit, IUD Insertion Kit, IUD Sterilizer, Autoclave.			
7	Invitation Ref No	DGFP/L&S-3/2019-20/56/98			
8	Date	18/06/2020			
KEY INFORMATION					
9	Procurement Method	Open Tender Method (OTM) (ICT)			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Development Budget and Project Aid			
11	Development Partner (if applicable)	International Development Association (IDA)			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project/Programme Code (if applicable)	224108500			
13	Project/Programme Name (if applicable)	4 th Health, Population & Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP)			
14	Tender Package No.	CC/GD-39			
15	Tender Package Name	Procurement of NSV Kit, Tubectomy Kit, IUD Insertion Kit, IUD Sterilizer, Autoclave.			
16	Tender Publication Date	19/06/2020			
17	Tender Last Selling Date	21/07/2020			
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	Date: 22/07/2020 Time: 12:30 PM			
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	Date: 22/07/2020 Time: 01:00 PM.			
20	Name & Address of the Office(s)	Address			
	-Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Office of the Director (Logistics and Supply) and Line Director (Procurement, Storage and Supply Management), Logistics & Supply Unit (5 th floor), Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215 Contact No- 01741404804			
	Selling Tender Document (Others)	Office of the Additional Director (Drugs & Stores) Central Warehouse, Directorate General of Family Planning, Nandipara (Uttargaon) Trimohoni, Union-Nasirabad, Thana- Khilgaon, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Contact No-01715018901			
	Receiving Tender Document	Building No. 3, Room No. 329 (3 rd Floor) Medical Education and Family Welfare Division			
	Opening Tender Document	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.			
21	Place/Date/Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	Not Applicable			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
22	Eligibility of Tenderer	As mentioned in the tender document			
23	Brief Description of Goods	Lot-1 6300 Sets NSV Kit, 6000 Sets Tubectomy Kit, 1500 Sets IUD Insertion Kit. Lot-2 2000 Pcs IUD Sterilizer (3 Chamber), 275 Pcs. Autoclave.			
24	Brief Description of Related Services	Not Applicable			
25	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	Taka 8000/- (Taka Eight thousand) only, non-refundable. Mode of payment should be made by Treasury Chalan from Bangladesh Bank/ Sonali Bank Code no: 1-7481-0000-2366 in favor of Director General, Directorate General of Family Planning, 6, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. Original copy of the Treasury Chalan must be online verification/certified (CTR) by the concerned accounts' office.			
26	Lot No.	Identification of items	Location	Tender Security Amount	Completion Time in Weeks/Months
	Lot-1	6300 Sets NSV Kit, 6000 Sets Tubectomy Kit, 1500 Sets IUD Insertion Kit	Central Warehouse (rented), Family Planning, Nandipara (Uttargaon) Trimohoni, Union-Nasirabad, Thana-Khilgaon, Dhaka	BDT 10,00,000.00 or equivalent US\$ 11,710.00.	Delivery of the entire quantity of goods shall have to be completed within 12 weeks from the date of opening of the Letter of Credit(L/C).
	Lot-2	2000 Pcs. IUD Sterilizer (3 Chamber), 275 Pcs. Autoclave.		BDT 10,00,000.00 or equivalent US\$ 11,710.00.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS					
27	Name of Official Inviting Tender				
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender				
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender				
30	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender				
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.				
If the opening date falls on any office holiday, the first working day will be the last selling date of tender document and the next working day will be the opening date.					

(Suresh Kumar Sarker)
 Director (Logistics and Supply) & Line Director (PSSM-FP)
 Directorate General of Family Planning
 Phone: 55012349

GD- 1012