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Finance Minister AMA Muhith cuts a ribbon at the opening of the Dutch Bangla Expo 2016, at RAI Convention Centre in the Netherlands on September 28. Dutch-Bangla Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bangladesh embassy in the Netherlands jointly organised the two-day trade fair.

European industry rebounds after Brexit blip

AFP, *Frankfurt*

Industrial output surged in August in three of the eurozone's top economies, data released Friday showed, providing evidence to of a rebound from the Brexit vote shock.

Meanwhile output unexpectedly dropped in Britain after having initially held up following the June vote to leave the European Union.

Industrial production in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, shot up 2.5 percent higher in August from July, when it tumbled by 1.5 percent, according to data from the federal statistics office Destatis corrected for price, seasonal, and calendar effects.

Analysts surveyed by Factset had predicted an increase of just 1.0 percent.

Meanwhile in France, industrial output jumped 2.1 percent in August, having slid 0.5 percent in July, the French statistics office Insee said.

In Spain, industrial output climbed 1.4 percent after having been essentially flat in July, according to data from Ine.

The results suggest "the initial Brexit shock has been digested" in the wake of Britain's June 23 vote to quit the EU, analyst Carsten Brzeski at ING Diba bank said after the German figures were released.

"The outlook for the third quarter all of a sudden looks much brighter," he added.

Meanwhile economist Stephen Brown at Capital Economics said that sharp rises "suggest that industry might contribute positively to eurozone GDP growth" in the third quarter.

He called the strong numbers from France and Spain a surprise, noting that the conensus forecast had been for a 0.7 percent gain in France and a 0.1 percent dip in Spain.

The data provides hard evidence to back up surveys of businesses that pointed to quick recovery for the European economy, although analysts have warned of a further impact as Brexit negotiations approach and get underway next year.

Britain's finance minister Philip Hammond warned earlier this week of "some turbulence as we go through this negotiating process".

Comments by British Prime Minister Theresa May and European leaders this week suggesting a toughening of positions towards a "hard" Brexit that would see Britain lose access to the EU single market has sent the pound to 31-year lows.

G20: populist politicians threaten global economy

AFP, *Washington*

The G20 warned Friday that populist politicians playing up anti-globalization and anti-free trade sentiments were putting the global economy at risk.

The grouping of 20 economic powers suggested that the forces that have put Republican Donald Trump within reach of the US presidency and led to Britain's vote to leave the European Union could stall already frail global growth.

While not mentioning Trump or other politicians by name, China's Finance Minister Lou Jiwei, speaking on behalf of the G20, identified such voter-luring populism as one of the largest threats to the economy.

"This trend of deep anti-globalization populism has driven politicians to come up with their campaign slogans and try to win the votes and support. That has brought us uncertainty," Lou said after a G20 finance ministers meeting.

"We need to recognize some political risks such as the presidential election in some countries and in major economies," he added during the IMF-World Bank annual meetings in Washington.

Lou's comments came as the US presidential race entered its final weeks with upstart Trump wielding potent anti-immigration, anti-free trade rhetoric in his battle with Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

But also in the background are the populist currents in Europe behind the Brexit vote and those affecting the coming French and German elections.

In both regions, politicians have made gains touting their opposition to the ambitious transatlantic and transpacific free trade deals, known respectively as TTIP and TPP, potent vote-getters among people worried the deals will cost jobs. The trend has worried the leaders of the world's largest development institutions, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.

Lagarde said that with the world economy growing at a "sub-par" 3.1 percent this year, now is not the time to be erecting trade barriers.

"Trade has become a political football," she said Friday.

Kim urged world governments to banish "the storm clouds of isolationism and protectionism," saying that open borders had lifted a billion people out of poverty in over a quarter century.

Few of the powerful economic decision makers in Washington would speak openly about Trump, though he was clearly a key worry.

Pierre Moscovici, the EU economic affairs commissioner, took the issue head on, saying that, in the US election, Trump "is not the most reassuring choice from an economic point of view."

And speaking at a conference on the fringes of the IMF-World Bank meetings, the head of the Institute of International Finance global banking association said the populist rhetoric was impacting markets.

"Policy-makers may be tempted by the siren songs of protectionism and nativism, but a retreat inward would be a break with the principles that have delivered unprecedented progress to literally billions of people throughout the world," said Tim Adams. At the same time, all the officials acknowledged that, as politicians like Trump have been arguing, globalization has hurt certain populations and in some cases exacerbated inequality.

"Our research shows that inequality is still far too high, both globally and within countries, constraining growth and breeding instability," Kim said Thursday.

"We need to focus on growth and continue to reduce inequality -- and we have to make growth more equitable, and more sustainable."

Meanwhile in New York, negotiators on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership responded to the political attacks on their talks by saying they were determined to push toward a deal, which would establish the world's largest free trade zone.

"We have heard some skeptical voices about TTIP lately, but I want to emphasize that the United States remains fully engaged in these negotiations and is as committed as ever to their success," said chief US negotiator for the United States Dan Mullaney.

Britain amends Lloyds bank share sale on market unrest

AFP, *London*

Britain's Treasury on Friday said it would no longer offload its final tranche of shares in state-rescued Lloyds Banking Group to the public, preferring institutional investors because of market volatility.

"Ongoing market volatility means it is not the right time for a retail offer," finance minister Philip Hammond said in a statement.

The London stock market and pound have experienced sharp swings since Britain voted on June 23 to exit the European Union, with the benchmark FTSE 100 index nearing a record high thanks in large part to sterling striking 31-year lows against the dollar.

Banks' share prices have meanwhile suffered, with their retail margins cut after the Bank of England slashed its main interest rate to a record-low 0.25 percent to ward off the threat of recession following the Brexit referendum.

"Shares of Lloyds dropped five percent (Friday) after the government abandoned its plans to offer shares to the public," noted CMC Markets analyst Jasper Lawler.

"The volatility in banking shares had made a sale to the public too risky. The government exiting its stake will ultimately be a good thing for the business, but not in the short term."

The Treasury on Friday said it had launched a "trading plan" for Lloyds Banking Group (LBG), which will see a gradual selling of the remaining 9.1-percent stake over a 12-month period.

The switch means Hammond has scrapped a plan by his predecessor George Osborne to launch a retail sale before the end of the year -- after a previous postponement blamed also on market volatility.

Since the height of the financial crisis eight years ago, the state has recovered around 16.9 billion pounds ($21 billion, 18.9 billion euros), or more than 80 percent of the bailout cost of LBG.

"A trading plan will ensure the government gets back all of the 20.3 billion pounds that taxpayers injected into Lloyds during the financial crisis," Friday's statement added.

Apple wins appeal, $120m award from Samsung restored

AFP, *Washington*

A US appeals court on Friday handed Apple a victory in one of its battles with rival Samsung, reinstating a $119.6 million verdict for the iPhone maker for patent infringement.

In the latest twist in a series of patent cases between the smartphone giants, the Federal Circuit Appeals judges ruled 8-3 in a rehearing of the case, reversing a panel of the same court in February. Apple's lawsuit contends that Samsung infringed on patents for "slide to unlock" and autocorrection, among others.

Friday's ruling said Samsung failed to prove that some of the Apple innovations were "obvious" and thus not able to be patented. The opinion also said the court must defer to the decision of the jury when in doubt.

"Even in cases in which a court concludes that a reasonable jury could have found some facts differently, the verdict must be sustained if it is supported by substantial evidence on the record that was before the jury," Judge Kimberly Moore wrote for the majority.

Apple asked for an "en banc" rehearing of the case -- before all the appeals court judges -- following February's decision to toss out the award. Apple had sought some $2.2 billion at trial, only to have a jury award the California-based company $119.6 million.

In February, the panel of judges ruled that Samsung did not infringe on one of the Apple patents and that the remaining two, which involved auto-correct and slide-to-unlock features, were not valid.

Neither company responded to requests for comment.

The case is separate from another suit in which Samsung was ordered to pay $548 million for patent infringement to Apple and whose appeal is set for a hearing next week in the US Supreme Court.

Samsung and Apple decided in 2014 to drop all patent disputes outside the United States, marking a partial ceasefire in a seemingly relentless legal war between the world's two largest smartphone makers.

The companies have battled in close to a dozen countries, with each accusing the other of infringing on various patents related to their flagship smartphone and tablet products.

Brazil inflation falls to 8.48pc

AFP, *Brasilia*

Brazil's inflation continued its slow fall in September in a positive sign for the new government as it wrestles to end the worst recession in nearly a century.

The 12 month rate fell to 8.48 percent, down from 8.97 in August.

For the month, prices rose just 0.08 percent, far less heated than the 0.44 percent increase recorded in August.

It was the smallest monthly increase since July 2014, when prices rose 0.01 percent and the lowest increase for a September since 1998.

Food prices, which helped lead the overall rate by shooting up 9.11 percent between January and August, slipped slightly in September. Transport costs also fell fractionally, while housing rose 0.63 percent from August and health costs rose 0.33 percent.

The easing off of price rises will be welcome to regular Brazilians who have been hammered by inflation, rising joblessness and a profound economic slowdown. President Michel Temer has vowed to take painful austerity measures to return the economy to health.

The lower inflation will also boost expectations for the Central Bank to start cutting interesting rates which have been pegged unchanged at 14.25 percent for the last year.

Inflation in Brazil fell in June by 0.35 percent to an annual rate of 8.84 percent, but remains almost double the government target, official figures showed on Friday.

This was an improvement from May, when inflation hit 9.32 percent, temporarily reversing a three-month falling trend.

Saifuddin M Naser, managing director of National Finance Ltd, and ABM Siddique, president of Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra, a non-governmental organisation, attend the signing of a Tk 2 crore financial agreement, at the head office of National Finance on October 5.

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