



Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia, and Arshad Muhammad, acting country director of CARE Bangladesh, exchange documents after signing a memorandum of understanding in Dhaka on Thursday. Garment workers of two factories in Gazipur will enjoy smooth online payment of their wage and other benefits through agent banking outlets, which will be set up inside the factories in a pilot phase.

Saudi wants Opec to solve own problems before meeting non-Opec

REUTERS, Dubai/London

Top Opec oil exporter Saudi Arabia has told the producer group it will not attend talks on Monday with non-Opec producers to discuss limiting supply, Opec sources said, as it wants to focus on having consensus within the organisation first.

The Nov. 28 meeting in Vienna was planned to discuss the contribution that producers outside Opec will make to a proposed supply-limiting agreement. Opec oil ministers meet on Wednesday in an effort to finalise their deal.

"There is an official letter from (Saudi Arabia) saying (it is) not attending the meeting because the ministers should agree to the cut and then present the agreement to non-Opec countries," an Opec source said. "This will be more effective."

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is trying to cement a preliminary September agreement in Algeria that would reduce its production to between 32.5 million and 33 million barrels per day, its first supply curb since 2008.

Opec aims to remove a supply glut and prop up oil prices, which at below \$48 a barrel are less than half their level of mid-2014. Oil prices extended an earlier decline on Friday after news of the Saudi no-show.

The organisation also wants non-Opec producers such as Russia to curb output. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday said Opec had proposed that

non-Opec cut oil production by 500,000 bpd.

Monday's talks will be converted into another Opec-only meeting, Opec sources said, to try to resolve the group's internal differences before the ministerial gathering on Wednesday.

A similar Opec and non-Opec meeting in October resulted in no specific pledges from outside producers to cut output, with attendees citing the lack of an internal Opec agreement.

Saudi Arabia had asked that this earlier meeting be called off, but was convinced by other members to attend in order not to embarrass the group, a source said.

Despite extensive diplomacy, the Opec side of the deal still faces setbacks from Iraq's call for it to be exempt and from Iran, which wants to increase supply because its output has been hit by sanctions.

A meeting of Opec experts this week made some progress in how to implement the cut, but Iran and Iraq raised conditions for participating, according to sources.

"We have to solve our problems as Opec first. We have not achieved an agreement within Opec," a Gulf source familiar with Saudi oil thinking said on Friday.

"Before we meet with non-Opec and ask them to participate in any action, we have to have an agreement that is credible with clear numbers and a system that the market believes."

Tata Steel removes Mistry as chairman

AFP, New Delhi

India's Tata Steel removed Cyrus Mistry as chairman of its board Friday, as uncertainty grows over the fate of its huge loss-making British assets.

The move comes after Mistry was unceremoniously sacked last month as chairman of Tata Sons, the holding company of India's most famous family conglomerate -- the \$103 billion steel-to-salt Tata Group.

Tata Steel Limited (TSL) said in a statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange that O. P. Bhatt, an independent director on the board, would replace Mistry until the outcome of an extraordinary general meeting on December 21.

The decision to remove Mistry was taken by "majority consent" at a meeting of the board of directors in Mumbai on Friday.

British economy grows 0.5pc in third quarter

AFP, London

Britain's economy grew by 0.5 percent in the third quarter, unrevised official data showed on Friday.

Gross domestic product expanded in the three months to the end of September but at a slower pace compared with growth of 0.7 percent in the second quarter, the Office for National Statistics said in a second estimate.

The data comes two days after the UK government said Britain's economy would grow far slower than expected next year as state borrowing jumps mainly as a result of a projected financial fallout from Brexit.

Analysts pointed to an economy intact since the June 23 referendum in favour of Britain exiting the European Union but warned of troubles ahead.

Trump's Treasury pick: what message to the markets?

AFP, Washington

A former banker, a congressman, a former captain of industry: which one President-elect Donald Trump chooses as the US Treasury secretary will send a key message about his administration's economic plans.

His signature will be on the back of the US currency, but more importantly the Treasury secretary is a key player in financial regulation, guarantor of the world's largest reserve currency, architect of economic relations with China and leader of the fight against the financing of terrorism.

Several names have circulated in the race to replace Jack Lew, President Barack Obama's finance minister since 2013, but two seem to stand out: former Goldman Sachs investment banker Steven Mnuchin, 53, and the conservative Congressman Jeb Hensarling, 59.

JPMorgan boss Jamie Dimon, 60, and Blackstone real estate investor Jonathan Gray, 46, reportedly rebuffed overtures by Trump's transition team.

Industrialist Daniel DiMiccio, 66, former head of Nucor Steel and "Made in America" champion, also has been mentioned for the post but could instead lead the foreign trade portfolio.

The range of capabilities of the candidates under consideration are "reflective of the breadth and depth of the Treasury agenda today," said Robert Kimmitt, a deputy Treasury

secretary in George W. Bush's administration.

Trump's plans for the economy are vast. He plans to reform the Dodd-Frank financial regulation law and campaigned for major corporate tax cuts, while promising massive infrastructure spending and the return of offshored jobs to the United States.

Treasury also is at the center of the fight against the financing of terrorism, including imposing sanctions against Iran and North Korea. And the department oversees one of two regular economic dialogues with China, made more interesting by the fact Trump has vowed to take a firmer stance against the country.

Kimmit wonders if this dialogue will be able to continue, since just two months after Trump takes office, Treasury will have to submit to Congress its semi-annual report on foreign exchange policies, which in particular focuses on China.

That is the vehicle the administration would use to declare China a currency manipulator, something it has escaped in recent years, although economists say the country now is in fact propping up the yuan.

David Wessel, economic analyst at the Brookings Institution, said that in the wake of the 2008 Great Recession, it will be crucial that the next Treasury secretary have "the capacity to deal with a financial crisis, whether it's caused by a big banking mess, even the financial aspect of a terrorist strike."

But he warned, "One thing we've learned is that you don't want somebody who has to learn on the job."

Given the unpredictable personality of the new president, the ideal candidate will also have to show diplomacy and authority.

"Given the nature of Donald Trump the Treasury secretary is going to have an important role in both restraining some of Trump's impulses and also in interpreting what Trump really means to the rest of the world," Wessel told AFP.

"We have already seen how confusing some of his statements can be. That can be very damaging for the confidence in the economy, it can cause unwelcome volatility on financial markets," he said.

So ideally this key position will be filled by someone "who can both influence the president and speak for him with authority so that we don't have unnecessary misunderstandings."

Another key role will be managing relations with Congress. This could make Texas Representative Hensarling, chairman of the influential House Financial Services Committee, a frontrunner since the promised tax cuts will widen the deficit and inflate the debt.

It will be difficult for a candidate to check all the boxes for the Treasury post, to be a Wall Street specialist and a negotiator with Congress or especially a liaison with the president himself, Wessel cautions.



A trust deed agreement was signed recently between Credence Asset Management Ltd and Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) to launch Credence First Growth Fund. Md Iftikhar-uz-zaman, managing director of ICB, Md Zakir Hossain, managing director of Credence Asset Management, and AKM Alamgir Bhuiyan, a director, were present at the signing ceremony.

Japan's huge pension fund bounces back from losses

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's public pension fund, the world's biggest, said Friday it has swung back from huge losses, providing some respite after coming under fire for moving a chunk of its bond-heavy portfolio into riskier equities.

The Government Pension Investment Fund said it had a return of 1.84 percent, or 2.37 trillion yen (\$21 billion) in the three months through September, boosting its total assets to 132.1 trillion yen.

Gains in Japanese and foreign stocks helped offset a loss on its bond holdings, the fund said.

The figure comes after two straight quarters of losses totalling about 10 trillion yen.

In 2014, the fund said it would double the amount of equities it holds to generate higher returns.

"It'll take some pressure off," said Naoki Fujiwara, chief fund manager at Shinkin Asset Management, in Tokyo.

"This quarter will probably be good too. But before we all get too excited, we need to be wary about whether this can continue for long," he told Bloomberg News.

The conservative fund was criticised for its decision to push into stocks. It then posted in July-September last year its worst quarterly fall since 2008, hit by a global equity sell-off fuelled by fears over China's economy.

The strategy shift announced in 2014 was aimed at dealing with Japan's soaring number of retirees who depend on the mammoth pension.

Unlike some overseas counterparts, Japan's pension fund has long kept the majority of its cash in super-safe and super-low return Japanese government bonds.

But with a growing number of retirees and shrinking workforce straining government finances -- and Tokyo struggling to boost the world's number three economy -- Japan's pension fund managers are looking for ways to improve their returns.

CEO of China's Founder Group fined \$100m for insider trading

AFP, Beijing

A technology company CEO who may have given a Chinese politician's son the Ferrari in which he crashed and died was jailed for nearly five years and fined more than \$100 million for insider trading, court documents showed Friday.

A dozen former executives of major Chinese technology conglomerate Founder Group, including CEO Li You, were convicted of insider trading and other offences, said the intermediate people's court in Dalian, in northeastern China.

Li was sentenced to four and a half years in prison and fined 750.2 mil-

lion yuan (\$108.5 million), it said.

The Founder Group was established in 1986 with investment from Peking University and has expanded into IT, healthcare, real estate, finance, and commodities trading.

According to the Beijing News, Li and Wei Xin, former chairman of the company, were linked to fallen Chinese presidential aide Ling Jihua, who was jailed for life in July for corruption, illegally obtaining state secrets and abuse of power.

An ex-aide of former president Hu Jintao, Ling was brought down in the high-profile corruption crackdown by current President Xi Jinping that has deposed several senior officials.

Chinese media have previously quoted reports saying that Li gave Ling's son Ling Gu a Ferrari.

Ling Gu was killed in a high-speed crash in Beijing in 2012, when two women passengers, one of them naked, were injured, a scandal that helped trigger his father's downfall.

Ling Jihua asked for and accepted over 6.43 million yuan from Wei, Xinhua said, and was aware of payments from Wei to his son.

The Founder executives were charged with insider trading, hiding financial information, and obstructing official business, with no accusations relating to Ling.



Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, chairman of audit committee of Islami Bank, opens the 311th branch of the bank at Rajapur in Jhalakathi on Tuesday. Mohammad Abdul Mannan, managing director of the bank, and other senior officials were present.

ASM Mohiuddin Monem, honorary consul of Czech Republic in Bangladesh and deputy managing director of Abdul Monem Ltd, pays a courtesy call on Abdullah HM Al-Mutairi, ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Dhaka, at Saudi Embassy in Gulshan recently. They discussed bilateral issues including trade and investment, education and people-to-people relations.



ABDUL MONEM LTD