



Agreement Signing Ceremony

Between

A Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Bank Asia; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive of Pran-RFL Group; Uzma Chowdhury, director of Pran-RFL Group; Mohd Safwan Choudhury and AM Nurul Islam, vice chairmen of the bank; Rumea A Hossain, chairman of board executive committee; Mashiur Rahman, chairman of board audit committee; M Shahajahan Bhuiyan, director, and Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of the bank, attend a deal signing ceremony at Rangs Bhaban in Dhaka on Tuesday. Bank Asia's Agent Banking will set service delivery points inside Pran-RFL Group's Daily Shopping and Best Buy, establish ATM booth on a factory premise in Iswardi and open collection account for Sun Basic Chemicals Ltd, a concern of Pran-RFL Group.

Siemens sees brighter outlook after strong quarter

AFP, Berlin

The German industrial conglomerate Siemens said Tuesday that full-year earnings would surpass previous estimates, after reporting a 25 percent jump in quarterly net profit.

The company said the stronger earnings in the three months to December 31 reflected healthier operating margins in most of its business lines.

CEO Joe Kaeser has been pursuing a far-reaching restructuring of the company, whose activities range from gas and wind turbines to trains and medical equipment.

"We are sending a clear signal", Kaeser said in a statement, adding that Siemens would "continue to rigorously execute our strategy programme", called Vision 2020.

It raised its forecast for full-year earnings per share to 7.20 euros to 7.70 euros (\$7.77 to \$8.30), compared with its previous goal of 6.80 to 7.20 euros.

But the company still expects economic headwinds, including unfavourable foreign exchange rates and limited economic growth and investments because of "complex geopolitical environment".

It expects only "modest" revenue growth for the full year, after revenue growth of just one percent in the first quarter, to 19.1 billion euros.

Net profit jumped to 1.94 billion euros, from 1.56 billion in the same period last year. New orders fell 14 percent in the quarter, to 19.6 billion euros.

Japan pushes back on Trump's currency devaluation claim

AFP, Tokyo

Japan on Wednesday denied Donald Trump's accusation Tokyo "played the money market" to give it an unfair trade advantage, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe saying the claims of currency devaluation were untrue.

The remarks, which also targeted China, are the latest by the tycoon against the United States' global partners and come just before a meeting with Abe in which trade is expected to top the agenda.

In a speech to business executives at the White House Trump, he said: "You look at what China is doing and what Japan has done over the years, and they played the money market and the devaluation market and we sit there like a bunch of dummies."

The comments sent the dollar plunging towards 112 yen briefly Tuesday, with trad-

ers taking them as further evidence Trump will press ahead with a protectionist agenda many fear could spark a global trade war.

Questioned in parliament about the outburst, Abe, with a diplomatic eye on next week's meeting, said: "We have tasked the Bank of Japan under Governor (Haruhiko) Kuroda with an appropriate monetary policy to achieve the two percent price-stability goal.

"We have repeatedly said their criticism that we are guiding the yen lower is not true."

However, chief government spokesman Yoshihide Suga was a little more forthcoming saying the comments were "completely off the mark".

Suga, a key Abe ally, noted that Group of 20 members had agreed to avoid currency depreciation as a policy tool.

"Foreign exchange rates are moving in

line with the current and mid-to-long term economic situation."

Separately, senior finance ministry official Masatsugu Asakawa flat out denied Trump's assertion.

"Foreign exchange rates are determined by the markets," he told reporters, according to Japanese media. "We are not manipulating them."

He added: "I don't quite understand what (Trump) actually meant" and noted Japan had not intervened in currency markets for several years.

While campaigning for the presidency Trump often targeted China for destroying US jobs with its trade practices and accused Beijing of being a currency manipulator. But the dig at Tokyo suggests he is preparing for a new relationship with traditional partners.

Abe, speaking about his meeting with Trump, told lawmakers he intends to dis-

cuss "how Japan can create jobs" in the US as well as broader economic cooperation with his country's key security ally.

He also stressed Japanese investment has greatly contributed to employment in the United States, including "1.5 million jobs in the auto industry alone".

Trump has threatened punitive tariffs on imports into the US in a bid to force manufacturers, domestic and foreign, to produce and hire there.

He targeted Toyota in one of his fiery tweets, criticising a project to build a new factory in Mexico and threatening it with levies.

On Monday a poll in Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan's biggest daily newspaper, found 70 percent of respondents were concerned about ties with the US under Trump.

The same percentage also believes his administration will be more negative than positive for Japan's economy.

German workers must get higher wage increases: Germany's Schulz

REUTERS

Germany's center-left candidate for chancellor Martin Schulz has called for bigger pay rises for workers, an unusual move in a country where wages are traditionally negotiated by managers and union leaders without political interference.

Schulz made his case for higher wages a week after his nomination by the Social Democrats to run against Chancellor Angela Merkel, a surprise move which has seen support for his SPD party jump according to a Forsa poll released on Wednesday.

"We have a lot of catching up to do when it comes to wages," Schulz told the Funke media group in an interview.

The former European Parliament president said the profits of German companies had grown faster over the past decades than the incomes of workers.



Khwaja Shahriar, deputy managing director of LankaBangla Finance, receives the SAFA Best Presented Annual Report Awards 2015 under the financial service sector category from AMA Muhith, finance minister, at a programme at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on January 27.

South Africa and EU spar over chicken meat dumping

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's poultry industry says it is on the brink of collapse due to hotly-denied accusations that the European Union is dumping cheap chicken in the country in a dispute over free trade.

Workers, former workers and company managers from the South African poultry sector will march on the EU headquarters in Pretoria on Wednesday, furious over cheap imports and mounting job losses.

But the EU has accused the industry of using it as a "handy scapegoat" for domestic production problems, and said volumes of EU chicken imported to South Africa were too small to be responsible for the crisis.

Organisers of the march said that 4,000-5,000 jobs had already been lost, and that 110,000 more were at risk in the industry, plus 20,000 in the feed supply sector. RCL Foods, South Africa's largest poultry producer, last month laid off 1,350 employees -- 20 percent of its workforce -- and is selling 15 of its 25 farms.

"This issue has been growing since the EU started to send more and more leg quarters to South Africa at what we consider dumped prices," RCL Foods managing director Scott Pitman, who

will join the march, told AFP.

"Not only have we taken a financial burden over the last five years, but the loss has got so big that we are going to go bankrupt if we don't cut the size of our business."

The South African poultry industry alleges that the EU dumps off-cuts of "dark meat" -- chicken thighs and drumsticks -- in South Africa at below-cost prices because the European market prefers breast meat. "This is a form of waste disposal," Kevin Lovell, the boss of the South African Poultry Association (SAPA), told AFP.

South Africa is struggling with slow growth at just 0.4 percent last year and unemployment is stuck stubbornly high at 27 percent -- posing a major challenge to the ANC government.

On Monday, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe suggested the government should intervene by buying poultry farms that are closing down and finding new markets for their produce.

In the face of damaging accusations of dumping, the European Union has fought back, saying the South African poultry industry was blaming others for its own failures.

"It is a distortion... to think that it is the EU trade policy which is the origin, let alone the main source, of the current woes of the SA chicken industry."

According to EU figures, EU exports account for less than seven percent of total South African chicken consumption, and EU imports of "dark meat" account for only 14 percent of local market consumption.

Cornaro said a lack of competition, a severe drought pushing up feed prices, rising electricity costs and injecting brine (salt water) were causing South African industry's problems rather than EU imports.

The EU said it would welcome marchers into their delegation offices on Wednesday to discuss their concerns. Brazil was the biggest poultry importer to South Africa in the first half of 2016, followed by Netherlands, Britain and Spain.

Trade Minister Rob Davies told Bloomberg News last week the poultry sector was in "distress", adding "we will not have an industry to raise the competitiveness" if imports continue to flood the market.

On top of tough avian flu restrictions, South Africa has imposed anti-dumping duties on EU importers and, in December, also introduced an extra "safeguard" tariff to try to protect the industry.

Apple defies Wall Street with strong revival in iPhone sales

REUTERS, San Francisco

Apple Inc reclaimed the throne as the world's top smartphone seller for the first time in five years on Tuesday, beating out rival Samsung in units shipped for the holiday quarter and boosting revenues with a strong showing for its new, top-of-the-line iPhone 7 Plus.

The iPhone sales numbers, and a profit of almost \$18 billion, both handily beat Wall Street expectations, sending its shares up 3 percent in after-hours trading.

But the gains were tempered by Apple's cautious outlook for the current quarter, which it mainly attributed to the strong US dollar, which hurts companies like Apple that sell a majority of their products overseas, by forcing them to raise prices, which depresses unit sales, or sacrifice margins.

Apple sold 78.29 million iPhones in the fiscal first quarter ended Dec. 31, up from 74.78 million the year before. Analysts on average had expected 77.42 million, according to research firm FactSet StreetAccount.

That beat Samsung Electronics' 77.5 million smartphone sales in the quarter, according to tech data firm Strategy Analytics, the first time that has happened since the fourth quarter of 2011.

The results, which reflected the first full quarter of iPhone 7 sales, come at a time when global demand for smartphones is slowing and cheaper

Android alternatives are flooding the market. Apple may also have benefited from Samsung's much-publicized recall of the its fire-prone Galaxy Note 7.

Apple is heavily dependent on the success of iPhones, which account for more than two-thirds of its total revenue.

Analysts and investors have already set their sights on Apple's 10th-anniversary iPhone, which is expected to feature better touchscreen technology, wireless charging and a shift to a higher-resolution OLED display.

Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook said demand was especially high for the larger iPhone 7 Plus in the fiscal first quarter. Revenue in the services business -- which includes the App Store, Apple Pay and iCloud -- jumped 18.4 percent to \$7.17 billion, helped by the popularity of games, including Pokemon Go and Super Mario Run, and increased revenue from subscriptions.

Cook, who met with lawmakers in Washington last week, said he was "optimistic, given what I am hearing" that there would be changes to the corporate tax reform this year that would allow Apple to bring more than \$200 billion in offshore cash back to the United States.

"What we would do with it, let's wait and see," Cook told analysts in response to a question. "We are always looking at acquisitions... There's not a size we wouldn't do just based on the size of it. It's more about the strategic value."

Apple is still looking for major new sources of growth as Apple TV struggles to set itself apart from competitors and its plans to enter the autonomous driving market take shape. The company said Apple Watch sales set a record last quarter, but provided no numbers.

Analysts expect growth in services to help offset declining hardware sales as the smartphone market matures. The services business also has gross margins that are higher than Apple's overall company average, which could help offset the extra cost of new features like the OLED screens while still meeting an overall gross margin target of between 38 percent and 39 percent.

"That's a very high-margin business that is helping Apple navigate its innovation," said Anil Doradla, an analyst with William Blair & Co.

Cook said on Tuesday that he expects services revenue to double in the next four years as the installed base of iPhones and iPads continues to grow.

While Apple's revenue from the Greater China region fell 11.6 percent to \$16.23 billion for the quarter, Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri cast the numbers as positive.

"We were encouraged by our performance in China because it was clearly an improvement over the last couple of quarters. In mainland China in particular, our revenue was flat and actually grew in constant currency terms," Maestri said.



One Bank Chairman Sayeed H Chowdhury and Managing Director M Fakhru Alam pose with the recipients of scholarships of different educational institutions in Barisal and Faridpur districts, at a programme in Barisal on January 28.