



Aftab Mahmud Khurshid, chief marketing officer of Bengal Group, which owns Linnex Electronics BD Ltd, and Md Shafquat Hossain, head of retail banking at Dhaka Bank, exchange the signed documents of a deal at a programme in Dhaka. Under the deal, the bank's credit cardholders purchasing Linnex products worth over Tk 10,000 will be able to make the payment in three to 12 monthly instalments at zero interest.

Bitcoin bounces 20pc after dipping below \$3,000

REUTERS, London

Bitcoin bounced by more than 20 percent in the space of just four hours on Friday, having skidded below \$3,000 earlier as Chinese authorities ordered Beijing-based cryptocurrency exchanges to stop trading.

After a vertiginous climb to record highs close to \$5,000 earlier this month, bitcoin had plunged almost 40 percent in the 12 following days, with the sell-off driven in large part by fears of China cracking down on the market as well as a warning from JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon that bitcoin was a "fraud".

The rapidity of the fall - matched by losses across the hundreds of other cryptocurrencies that now rival bitcoin - had driven fears that a giant crypto-bubble was finally bursting. Bitcoin looked likely to record its worst week since 2013.

But after seven consecutive days of falls, bitcoin was up around 13 percent on the day by 1538 GMT at \$3,637 on the US Bitstamp exchange, around 22 percent up from its earlier low and leaving it just 13 percent down on the week.

Chinese exchanges were told by authorities to immediately notify users of their closure, and to stop allowing new user registrations as of Friday, according to a government notice.

But although Chinese exchanges used to dominate bitcoin trading - according to their reports - because of the fact that they did not charge fees, volumes have plunged since January, when Chinese authorities made fees mandatory.

That, industry experts said, means that although China is still important, the crackdown there would probably not be enough to cripple bitcoin, unless it was followed by exchange shut-downs in other parts of the globe. "Chinese volumes account for less than 10 percent of global volume - they are no big deal," said Charles Hayer, founder of cryptocurrency analysis website Cryptocompare.

Beijing-based platforms OkCoin and Huobi, which are among China's biggest exchanges, said on Friday that they planned to stop yuan-based trading by Oct. 31, confirming earlier reports.

Beijing cryptocurrency exchanges told to announce trading halt

REUTERS, Shanghai

Chinese authorities have ordered Beijing-based cryptocurrency exchanges to stop trading and immediately notify users of their closure, signalling a widening crackdown by authorities on the industry to contain financial risks.

Exchanges were also told to stop allowing new user registrations as of Friday, according to a government notice. The notice was signed by the Beijing city group in charge of overseeing internet finance risks and circulated online. A government source verified it to Reuters.

Platforms should also tell the government by Wednesday Sept. 20 how they will allow users to make withdrawals in a risk-free manner and handle funds to make sure investor interests are protected, according to the notice, which was also reported by state newspaper Securities Times.

"All trading exchanges must by midnight of Sept. 15 publish a notice to make clear when they will stop all cryptocurrency trading and announce a stop to new user registrations," the government notice said.

China is cracking down on the cryptocurrency business to try to limit risks as consumers pile into a highly speculative market that has grown rapidly this year. Reuters and other media reported earlier this week that it planned to shut down the exchanges.

Shanghai-based BTCChina, a major Chinese bitcoin exchange, said on Thursday it would stop all trading from Sept. 30, citing tightening regulation. Smaller Chinese bitcoin exchanges ViaBTC, YoBTC and Yunbi on Friday announced similar closures.

Beijing-based platforms OkCoin and Huobi, which are among China's biggest

exchanges, said late on Friday that they planned to stop yuan-based trading by Oct. 31.

By 1406 GMT, BTC's price was down 7.63 percent at 19,797.00 yuan (\$3,024.71).

The bitcoin price was down 5 percent at \$3,071 at 1036 GMT on U.S. exchange Bitstamp. The bitcoin price index on trade website Coindesk slid below \$3,000 for the first time in six weeks.

Bitcoin fell by more than 10 percent on Wednesday after a warning by JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon that it "is a fraud" and will eventually "blow up".

Li Lihui, a senior official at the National Internet Finance Association of China and a former president of the Bank of China, told a conference in Shanghai that global regulators should work together to supervise cryptocurrencies.

"Digital tokens like bitcoin, ethereum that are stateless, do not have sovereign endorsement, a qualified issuing body or a country's trust, are not legal currencies and should not be spoken of as digital currencies," he said.

"They can become a tool for illegal fund flows and investment deals."

He said there should be a distinction between digital currencies, which were being studied and developed by authorities such as the Chinese central bank, and digital tokens such as bitcoin. Digital currencies developed by authorities could be used for good, with the right regulation, he said.

The state-backed internet finance body was set up by the central bank, and its members include banks, brokerages, funds and consumer finance companies. On Wednesday, it urged members to abide by Chinese laws and not deal in cryptocurrencies.

Venezuela publishes oil prices in Chinese currency to shun US dollar

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuela published the price of its oil and fuel in Chinese currency on Friday in what it called an effort to free the socialist-run country from the "tyranny of the dollar," echoing a plan recently announced by President Nicolas Maduro.

Maduro last week said his government would shun the dollar after the United States announced sanctions that blocked certain financial dealings with Venezuela on accusations that the ruling Socialist Party is undermining democracy.

The global oil industry overwhelmingly uses the dollar for pricing of products.

A weekly Oil Ministry bulletin published on Friday listed September prices in yuan, while including prices from previous weeks and months in dollars.

"This format is the result of the announcement made on Sept 7 by the president ... that Venezuela will implement new strategies to free the country from the tyranny of the dollar," the ministry wrote in a statement released after the bulletin.

Venezuela's yuan-based prices appear to be the result of multiplying dollar prices by the dollar/yuan exchange rate.

The price per barrel for the week ending Friday was 306.26 yuan, equivalent to \$46.76 based on the exchange rate listed in a footnote. That is up from the previous week's

price of 300.91 yuan, or \$46.15 based on the corresponding exchange rate.

The ministry did not respond to an email seeking additional details.

"Nobody is changing contracts for now," said one oil trader consulted about the issue who asked not to be identified.

"Oil is a commodity that is traded almost exclusively in dollars. PDVSA's debts, for example, are still denominated in dollars ... and that's how they'll have to pay bond-

holders," the trader said, referring to the state oil company.

Venezuela's Dicom currency system on Wednesday temporarily suspended the sale of dollars in order to incorporate other currencies.

Late socialist leader Hugo Chavez during his 14-year rule repeatedly vowed to back away from the dollar, which he said was being printed indiscriminately and was destined to lose its place as the world's dominant currency.

But Venezuela remains dependent on the greenback given that it conducts ample commercial trade with the United States both through exports of oil and imports of U.S. food and consumer products.

Sanctions by the administration of President Donald Trump blocked U.S. citizens from buying new debt from Venezuela or its state oil company, but did not directly interrupt import and export operations.



A worker pumps gas into a car at a gas station in Venezuela.

Trump move to block chipmaker deal bad for America: Xinhua

REUTERS, Shanghai

US President Donald Trump's decision to block a Chinese-backed firm from buying a US-based chipmaker this week is detrimental to America's growth and the global economy, China's state news agency Xinhua said in a commentary on Saturday.

Canyon Bridge Capital Partners planned \$1.3 billion acquisition of Lattice Semiconductor Corp was one of the largest attempted by a Chinese-backed firm in the US microchip sector and was the first announced deal for the buyout fund, which launched last year with a focus on technology investment.

US regulatory scrutiny grew after Reuters reported in November that Canyon Bridge was funded partly by capital from China's central government and had indirect links to its space program.

Trump said in an executive order on Wednesday that Lattice and Canyon Bridge "shall take all steps necessary to fully and permanently abandon the proposed transaction" within 30 days.

"The move, which is detrimental to both America's growth and global economic recovery, also runs counter to the mutually-beneficial and win-win nature of China-U.S. relations," the Xinhua commentary said.

Security reviews of investments in sensitive sectors "should not be used as a tool to implement protectionism", it added, echoing comments by a Commerce Ministry spokesman last week.

Citing analysts who said Trump's decision was made with an eye to the 2018 midterm election, Xinhua called it "penny wise and pound foolish ... It is a short-sighted move to take protectionist measures amid sluggish global growth."

"Chinese investment is not 'Trojan Horse' with hidden purposes," it said. Trump is set to visit China in November.

"The two countries need to strengthen dialogue and communication, promote cooperation and exchanges in various fields and properly handle issues of common concerns. Only then can China and the United States push forward the world's most important bilateral relationship," Xinhua said.

France's Le Maire lauds French spending cuts to eurozone partners

AFP, Tallinn

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire firmly defended France's pro-business reforms to eurozone ministers on Friday that he said would put France back on track in Europe.

In unusually candid language, and speaking in English, Le Maire said "France is back" and will be stronger in Europe thanks to tough reforms that were met with protests in Paris and other cities earlier this week.

"We are taking very important

decisions now in France," Le Maire told reporters as he arrived for talks with his eurozone counterparts in Tallinn, Estonia.

The reforms are widely interpreted in EU circles as a condition set by powerful Germany for further integration of the eurozone, a wish of French President Emmanuel Macron.

Le Maire is also rumoured as a possible successor to Dutch Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem to head the Eurogroup of eurozone finance ministers.

"We are cutting in public spending, we are putting in reforms on the labour market which are probably the most important labour market reforms in France since a lot of years," he added.

Eurogroup head Dijsselbloem welcomed the "very wise" reforms that could help to "install confidence and trust among member states". "We will follow with interest the progress in France," added Dijsselbloem, who is a close ally of German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble, the eurozone's most influential figure.



Imrul Hossain Bhuiyan, country manager for HP Bangladesh, and MHH Fairoz, CEO of Singer Bangladesh Ltd, sign a deal at the latter's head office in Dhaka. Under the deal, HP products will be available at all Singer outlets across the country.

Human rights at centre of Vietnam-EU trade talks

AFP, Hanoi

A top European trade official warned Friday that a free trade pact with Vietnam could be scuppered if the communist country fails to address rights issues, saying the matter was central to ongoing talks.

The European Union free trade agreement, which was signed by Brussels and Hanoi in 2015 and could be ratified next year after a legal review, would slash nearly all tariffs between the two economies. But Vietnam's dismal human rights record has been flagged as a sticking point to finalising the deal.

The communist country's stance on forced labour and freedom of expression are at the core of current talks, Bernd Lange, chair of European Parliament's Committee for International Trade, told reporters in Hanoi Friday.

"They are really at the centre of the discussion... if there are not sufficient solutions then the agreement will be in troubled water," he said.

Vietnam has been accused of waging a crackdown on critics in recent months, jailing and handing out heavy sentences to dissidents while also targeting current and former officials it accuses of corruption. It made international headlines in August when Germany accused Hanoi of kidnapping a former state oil executive wanted for corruption from a Berlin park, sparking a massive diplomatic row.

Vietnam said the accused executive and former communist party member Trinh Xuan Thanh handed himself in over the charges, while Berlin slammed the Cold War-style episode as a "scandalous violation" of international law.

Lange said he raised the incident on his latest trip to Hanoi, where he met with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, trade officials and civil society groups.

"We now have more clarity and common understanding that in (the) future we have clear procedures for investigation and prosecution," he said, adding he was hopeful the issue would not drag on the free trade talks.

The EU trade deal will be a major boon for Vietnam's export-led economy, which is one of the fastest-growing in the region and has been doggedly courting international trade partners.

It stands to gain enormously from better access to European markets, especially after the United States pulled out of the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) earlier this year.