

US handbags, shovels on \$20b EU tariff list over Boeing

Handbags, tractors, shovels and fish are part of an 11-page list of US imports worth \$20 billion that the European Union on Wednesday said it could hit with tariffs in a transatlantic aircraft subsidy dispute.

The United States and the European Union have been battling for almost 15 years at the World Trade Organization over subsidies given to US planemaker Boeing and its European rival Airbus.

After partial victories for both sides, each is asking a WTO arbitrator to determine the level of countermeasures they can impose on the other.

The Trump administration last week proposed targeting a seven-page list of EU products for tariffs, ranging

from large aircraft to dairy products and wine, to counteract the harm from EU subsidies for Airbus worth an estimated \$11 billion.

Brussels has responded with its own list of some \$20 billion worth of US imports, including agricultural produce from dried fruit to ketchup, planes, fish, tobacco, handbags, suitcases, tractors, helicopters and video game consoles.

The published list will now be open to consultation until May 31 and could then be revised.

"The EU remains open for discussions with the US, provided these are without preconditions and aim at a fair outcome," EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said in a statement.

In both cases, WTO arbitrators have yet to set an amount, but the US case

against Airbus is more advanced, with a ruling possible in June or July. The EU case against Boeing could come early in 2020.

Both sides have said they would prefer a settlement that did not lead to the imposition of tariffs.

The European Union has meanwhile declared itself ready to start formal trade talks with the United States.

The Commission is set to start two sets of negotiations - one to cut tariffs on industrial goods, the other to make it easier for companies to show products meet EU or US standards.

However, it has insisted that agriculture not be included, putting the 28-country bloc at odds with Washington, which wants farm products to be part of the talks.



SM Kamaluddin, chairman of Concord Group, and Shahriar Kamal, managing director, inaugurate a six-day "Concord Baishakhi Abashon Mela-1426" at its corporate head office in the capital's Gulshan on Monday. Customers will get special price benefit and attractive gifts for spot booking during the housing fair.



Imran Ahmed, vice president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), attends a trade dialogue jointly organised by Custom House, Benapole and the chamber at the Benapole Customs Club on Tuesday. Representatives from the Benapole C&F Association, importers, exporters, and senior officials of customs and port authorities also took part.

Pakistan's PM to visit China next week, sign new pacts

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan will visit China next week to meet its leaders and deliver a keynote speech at the vast Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, the South Asian nation's foreign ministry said on Wednesday, as economic anxiety grows at home.

China has pledged about \$60 billion in infrastructure loans for Pakistan, touted as a success story of its Belt and Road initiative, which aims to build road and maritime trading routes across the globe.

But Pakistan's economy has hit serious turbulence over the past year and Islamabad is now finalising a bailout package with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stave off a balance of payments crisis, despite more than \$10 billion in short-term loans from allies such as China and Saudi Arabia.

Khan will visit China from April 25, and give a keynote speech at the three-day Belt and Road Forum that starts the following day. The high-profile gathering is one of China's biggest annual state events.

"In addition to participating in the Belt and Road Forum, the Prime Minister would also hold bilateral meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang," the ministry said in a statement.

The two countries will sign several pacts to enhance cooperation, and Khan will meet corporate and business



Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan speaks at the opening ceremony for the first China International Import Expo in Shanghai, China.

SELF-DRIVING CARS

Apple in talks with potential suppliers of sensors

Apple Inc has held talks with at least four companies as possible suppliers for next-generation lidar sensors in self-driving cars, evaluating the companies' technology while also still working on its own lidar unit, three people familiar with the discussions said.

The moves provide fresh evidence of Apple's renewed ambitions to enter the autonomous vehicle derby, an effort it calls Project Titan. The talks are focused on next-generation lidar, a sensor that provides a three-dimensional look at the road.

Apple is seeking lidar units that would be smaller, cheaper and more easily mass produced than current technology, the three people said. The iPhone maker is setting a high bar with demands for a "revolutionary design," one of the people familiar with the talks said. The people declined to name the companies Apple has approached.

The sensor effort means Apple wants to develop the entire chain of hardware to guide autonomous vehicles and has joined automakers and investors in the race to find winning technologies.

Current lidar systems, including units from Velodyne Inc mounted on Apple's fleet of self-driving test vehicles, use laser light pulses to render precise images of the environment around the car. But the systems can cost \$100,000 and use mechanical parts to sweep the laser scanners across the road.

That makes them too bulky and prone to failure for use in mass-produced vehicles. The shortcomings have spurred \$1 billion

in investment at dozens of startups and mature companies alike to make lidar smaller, cheaper and more robust.

Apple's interest in next-generation lidar sensors comes as it has sharply increased its road testing while bringing on key hires from Tesla Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google.

It remains unclear whether the goal of Apple's Project Titan is to build its own vehicle or supply the hardware and software elements of self-driving car while pairing with a partner for the entire vehicle.

But what is clear from Apple's interest in cheaper lidar systems is that it wants to control the "perception stack" of sensors, computers and software to drive an autonomous vehicle, regardless of who makes the vehicle, another person familiar with the talks said. The three people familiar with the talks declined to be identified because the discussions are not public.

In addition to evaluating potential outside suppliers, Apple is believed to have its own internal lidar sensor under development, two of the people said.

Alphabet-owned Waymo has taken a similar path, assembling a sensor and computer system while inking deals to buy vehicles from Fiat Chrysler Automobiles.

Apple gets "a lot of optionality by working on the perception stack," said the second person familiar with the talks. "Bringing a passenger car to the market is really, really hard, and there's no reason right now they need to jump into it."

The designs Apple is seeking could potentially be made with conventional semiconductor manufacturing techniques, all four people familiar with the talks said.

BOJ warns of overheating in real estate loans

The Bank of Japan issued a warning for the first time in 20 years that financial institutions may be over-extending real estate loans, a sign that years of ultra-low interest rates is prodding banks to move into riskier lending to make profits.

Nearly 60 percent of regional banks could suffer net losses a decade from now if corporate borrowing keeps falling at the current trend, the central bank said in a semi-annual report on Japan's banking system on Wednesday.

The report, which is among key factors the BOJ board will scrutinise in deciding monetary policy, highlights the mounting demerits of prolonged monetary easing such as the damage it is inflicting on financial institutions' profits.

"As regional banks have generally not been able to secure profits commensurate with the increase in risk-weighted assets, their capital adequacy ratios and stress resilience have declined moderately," the BOJ said in the report.



Farzana Chowdhury, CEO of Green Delta Insurance, and Farhad Zamil, country director of the Syngenta Foundation, exchange the signed documents of a deal in Dhaka on Tuesday. The insurer with the support of the foundation will provide insurance coverage to paddy and vegetable farmers in the northern part of Bangladesh through different NGOs, and farmers' hubs with contribution from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

UK annual inflation stable at 1.9pc

British annual inflation was unchanged in March, official data showed Wednesday, easing the pressure on the Bank of England to hike rates amid ongoing uncertainty over Brexit.

The Consumer Prices Index, which measures the cost of a basket of goods,

stood at 1.9 percent last month, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That matched February but undershot market expectations of 2.0 percent, the Bank of England's target rate.

Higher motor fuel prices were offset by the falling cost of food and computer games last month.

"This makes the Bank of England's

job somewhat easier, as there's no pressure to raise rates as it grapples with continued uncertainty over Brexit," said Hargreaves Lansdown economist Ben Brettell.

CPI inflation had hit a two-year low of 1.8 percent in January -- also the first time since 2017 that the rate had fallen beneath the BoE's target level.



Mofizur Rahman, managing director of Novoair, speaks at a seminar on aviation safety organised by the airline at the auditorium of the Bangladesh Airlines Training Center in Dhaka yesterday.

Mominul Islam, CEO of IPDC Finance, and Hossain Khaled, managing director of Anwar Landmark, exchange the signed documents of an agreement at the former's head office in Dhaka recently. Customers of Anwar Landmark will get special interest rate on home and auto loans from the non-bank financial institution.



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