

Trump says ‘phase 1’ China trade pact on track for November

AFP, Washington
 US President Donald Trump on Monday said progress in developing the text of a partial trade pact with China means he will likely be able to sign it next month.
 Trump remains upbeat on the chances Beijing and Washington will seal the mini-deal he announced earlier this month -- marking a cooling-off period in the two nations’ damaging trade war. “We’ll be able to, we think, sign a completed document with China on phase one,” Trump said at the White House.
 US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said efforts to commit the agreement to paper before the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Chile next month are “on track” though some work remains to be done.
 “Our target is to have the phase one deal by the time you go to Chile,” Lighthizer told Trump.
 Trump has said he expects to sign the partial deal on the sidelines of the summit when he meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping.
 While details are scant, the new mini-deal includes a surge in Chinese purchases of American farm exports and also covers intellectual property, financial services and currency exchange, according to the White House.
 Trump said Monday the Chinese “have started the buying.” China sounded a positive note at a defence forum being held in Beijing, with the vice minister of foreign affairs saying they wanted “China-US relations based on coordination, cooperation



REUTERS/FILE
 US President Donald Trump speaks to the press before a cabinet meeting at the White House in Washington on October 21.

and stability.” With hundreds of billions of dollars in two-way trade now subject to additional tariffs, there are mounting signs the trade war -- now in its second year -- has damaged the world economy, adding to pressure on both sides to strike a deal.
 “We don’t approve the tactic of brandishing the baton of tariffs at every turn and exerting maximum pressure on China,” said China’s Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Le Yucheng.
 “This practice is old thinking and will not work.” However, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said earlier Monday that the US side is not rushing to sign on the dotted line next month.
 “We would like to make a deal,” Ross told Fox Business on Monday.
 “But from our point of view, it has to be the right deal and it doesn’t have to be in November.” While the White House has said the “phase one” deal touches on major issues, Ross said the heaviest lifting remained to be done.
 “The real question is, do we get to an early signing of phase one?” said Ross, who is not a member of the US delegation to the trade talks.
 “Second, how far do we get toward phase two or two and three? Two and three are really where the meat is.”

EU demands clarifications from Italy, France on budgets
 Reuters, BRUSSELS
 The European Commission on Tuesday demanded urgent clarifications from Italy and France on their budget plans for next year, worried they veer widely from spending cut commitments made to Brussels.
 The letters from the EU’s executive arm requested a response by Wednesday and could be the first step before the commission rejects a budget outright and demands a new draft.
 Spain, Belgium and Finland were also contacted with concerns.
 “Italy’s plan does not comply with the debt reduction benchmark in 2020,” said a letter signed by EU economics affairs commissioner Pierre Moscovici and commission vice president Valdis Dombrovskis.
 Rome sent its budget on Wednesday hoping to get Brussels to agree to a deficit of 2.2 percent of GDP, which the EU said risked delaying the reduction of Rome’s massive debt mountain.
 The spending plans were the product of fraught negotiations between the new coalition in Italy, an unlikely partnership between the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the centre-left Democratic Party.
 “We will provide all clarifications to the EU, we are not concerned,” said Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.
 “It is a necessary dialogue with Brussels from which we will not escape.”
 France’s government unveiled a draft 2020 budget last month with more than



GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE
 MM Monirul Alam, managing director of Guardian Life Insurance, receives “Bangladesh Business Innovation Award 2019” in “honorable mention” in financial sector from Nihad Kabir, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, in the capital’s Le Meridien hotel recently. Bangladesh Innovation Conclave presented the award for app-based life insurance platform EasyLife.

Eurozone firms keep borrowing as growth fears mount
 AFP, Frankfurt
 Companies’ demand for bank loans held up in the eurozone in the third quarter, the European Central Bank found in a survey published Tuesday, in a mildly positive sign amid fears of a slowdown.
 “Net demand for loans to enterprises remained broadly unchanged in the third quarter,” the ECB said in its quarterly survey of 144 banks across the single currency area.
 But the steady interest in loans disappointed financial firms’ hopes earlier this year that the third quarter would bring growth in demand.
 “Demand slightly increased for loans to small- and medium-sized enterprises, but decreased for loans to large firms,” the ECB added.
 Many of the central bank’s measures to stimulate the economy in recent years have aimed at increasing bank lending, a more significant factor for growth in Europe than other advanced economies like the US.
 But the Frankfurt institution and

organisations like the International Monetary Fund were forced to slash eurozone growth forecasts in recent weeks, as external factors such as trade wars and Brexit weigh on the bloc.
 ECB economists now expect expansion of 1.1 percent this year and 1.2 percent in 2020.
 It was unclear Tuesday whether British MPs would vote through a last-minute divorce deal with the European Union.
 And a truce in the US’ damaging trade conflict with China remains elusive, while Washington last week slapped new tariffs on \$7.5 billion of EU imports.
 The ECB in September responded to slowing growth and mounting risks with a fresh and controversial big-bang package of measures.
 It relaunched mass bond-buying and further lowered a key interest rate into negative territory.
 Even before then, banks reported in the third-quarter survey that “the ECB’s negative deposit facility rate continued to contribute to an increase in lending volumes and a decrease in lending rates”



BANK ASIA
 Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia, and Jon Thiele, chief of party at the Feed the Future Bangladesh Aquaculture and Nutrition Activity, exchange a deal on signing it at the latter’s office in Dhaka last week. Micro loans will be provided to fish and aquaculture farmers at low interest rate and flexible repayment terms.



STANDARD BANK
 Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Standard Bank, opens a 136th branch at Pallabi in the capital’s Mirpur yesterday. Md Tariquul Azam, managing director (acting), was present.