

Indonesia rejects Apple's offer to invest \$100m

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia has rejected an Apple \$100 million investment proposal aimed at lifting a ban on iPhone 16 sales, saying it lacks the "fairness" required by the government.

Indonesia last month prohibited the marketing and sale of the iPhone 16 model over Apple's failure to meet local investment regulations requiring that 40 percent of phones be made from local parts as the country seeks to boost investments from giant tech companies.

Following the ban, Apple offered to increase its investments in Indonesia by \$100 million to allow the new phone to be sold domestically.

But Industry Minister Agus Gumiwang Kartasmita said Apple had not met the government's requirements, especially when compared with the tech giant's investments in other countries.

"Currently, Apple still has not invested in production facilities or factories in Indonesia," he said in a statement released late Monday.

He said the ministry urged Apple to immediately set up a production facility or factory in Indonesia "based on the fairness principles" so the company does not have to file an investment scheme proposal every three years.

Gold hits one-week low

REUTERS

Gold prices steadied on Tuesday, having touched their lowest in over a week earlier in the session as safe-haven demand for the metal eased on optimism about a potential ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

Spot gold was little changed at \$2,628.99 per ounce, as of 1017 GMT, after earlier hitting its lowest since Nov. 18. US gold futures were up 0.4 percent to \$2,629.50.

Gold fell over 3 percent on Monday, its deepest one-day decline in more than five months, on news that Israel looked set to approve a US plan for a ceasefire with Iran-aligned Hezbollah, with further pressure from US President-elect Donald Trump's nomination of Scott Bessent as US Treasury secretary.

"Gold prices today are being influenced by the sustained risk appetite that gained momentum yesterday," said Ricardo Evangelista, senior analyst at ActivTrades.

Sri Lanka kicks off much-delayed \$12.5b bond deal

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka said Tuesday it would honour a deal secured by its predecessor to restructure \$12.55 billion in international sovereign bonds, a key condition to maintain an IMF bailout loan.

The leftist government of President Anura Kumara Disسانayake, who came to power two days after the bond deal was announced in September, said it will implement the restructuring immediately.

A majority of private creditors of the South Asian nation agreed two months ago to a 27 percent haircut on their loans, but it needed approval of the new administration.

Disسانayake's National People's Power (NPP) party had criticised the restructuring as being unfavourable to the impoverished nation and vowed to renegotiate after coming to power.

However, since Disسانayake's party went onto win a landslide at November 14 parliamentary elections he has made a U-turn, saying the recovery was too fragile to make any changes.

"We extend our gratitude to our external creditors, the IMF and the Official Creditor Committee (OCC) for the good faith negotiations that have enabled us to reach this point," Disسانayake said in a statement also referring to bilateral lenders.

Sri Lanka declared a sovereign default on its external debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange to pay for essential imports such as food, fuel and medicines. The shortages led to months of street protests that forced then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.



Sylhet's Moulvibazar district is the biggest hub of tea growers in the country, responsible for around 55 percent of domestic production. Habiganj, a neighbouring district, is the second-largest producer, contributing 22 percent.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Tea auctions see higher prices this season

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chattogram

Tea is fetching higher prices at weekly auctions this year, with market players saying the imposition of a minimum price threshold and low supply of the cash crop are key factors for the rise.

However, tea growers are still unsatisfied as they claim the prices do not even cover their costs of production.

The Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) imposed floor prices on a trial basis for the current season as prices of tea had fallen drastically last year although the country produced a record amount of the evergreen shrub.

The average auction price dropped to a 12-year low of around Tk 171 per kilogramme (kg) last year, when 102.92 million kgs were harvested, according to data from the Chattogram Tea Auction Centre, where 98 percent of overall tea sales are logged.

A total of 29 weekly auctions have been held so far in the current season, which began with the first auction on April 29.

This year, the average price per kg of tea was roughly Tk 268 during the first auction of the season compared to Tk 249 last year.

Similarly, over the past 28 weekly auctions, the average price for tea leaves increased by 8.32 percent year-on-year.

Meanwhile, so far this season, the average price of tea stands at about Tk 214 per kg whereas it stood at Tk 197.46 after as many auctions last season.

Usually, prices begin to fall later in the season, but although prices have been trending downwards over the past few weeks, they are yet to fall below Tk 200 per kg like last season.

Shah Moinuddin Hasan, chairman of the Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB), said tea leaves collected early in the season are of higher quality and fetch good prices.

On the other hand, the quality of tea leaves



decreases as the months go on, so harvests near the end of the season garner lower prices, he added.

Hasan also said the minimum price threshold introduced by the Bangladesh Tea Board at the start of this season helped slightly increase prices.

Tea leaves are graded into six categories, with the minimum price being set at Tk 160 per kg and the highest quality tea fetching Tk 300.

The prices may also have been influenced by the fact that tea production dropped this year as sporadic rain coupled with flooding across the northern districts hampered plant growth during the budding phase.

Yet, tea growers remain dissatisfied with prices.

"Despite floor prices and low supplies boosting auction prices, it remains

inadequate considering production costs," said Kamran Tanvirur Rahman, chairman of the Bangladesh Tea Association.

Mentioning that production costs have surged due to higher input costs, he said it is difficult to make a profit given such prices.

Rahman warned that tea growers may face a bleak future if prices do not rise and they continue to make losses.

TTAB Chairman Hasan said good quality tea sent from gardens in Sylhet and Chattogram fetched good prices in auctions and boosted average prices.

However, the quality of tea provided by small growers in Panchagarh was not that good and therefore mostly went unsold. When they were sold, they fetched low prices.

Sylhet's Moulvibazar district is the biggest hub of tea growers in the country, responsible for around 55 percent of domestic production.

Stocks rise marginally after three days of losses

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Major indices of the stock market in Bangladesh rose marginally yesterday, breaking a three-day losing streak, as investors cautiously traded selective shares to make short-term gains amid price fluctuations.

The market was downbeat for the last few days following news reports of Bangladesh's credit ratings being downgraded by US-based credit rating agency Moody's.

As a result, Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) witnessed thin participation of investors and massive sales requests.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the country's premier bourse, rose by 0.13 percent from that on the previous day prior to closing at 5,143.

The DSES index, that represents Shariah-based companies, grew by 0.09 percent to 1,148.

The DS30 index for the blue-chip shares rose 0.13 percent to 1,894.

At Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), the CSE All-Share Price Index (CASPI), the premier index of the port city bourse, dropped by 63.84 points, or 0.44 percent, to settle at 14,332.

Of the issues that were traded on the DSE, 119 saw a rise in their prices, 200 closed lower and the remaining 79 did not witness any price movement.

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Turnover, which indicates the cumulative value of shares that changed hands on the trading floor, increased by 12.49 percent to Tk 360 crore.

The banking sector dominated the turnover chart, accounting for 23.13 percent of the total.

Block trades, which are high-volume securities transactions privately negotiated and executed outside the open market, contributed 6.7 percent.

NRB Bank Limited was the most-traded share with a turnover of Tk 20.2 crore.

Sector-wise, jute, miscellaneous and paper and printing were the top three to close in the positive, as per the day's market update by UCB Stock Brokerage.

Non-bank financial institutions, general insurance and food and allied became the top three to close in the negative.

Large-cap sectors, meaning those that account for large amounts in market capitalisation, which the value of their shares at present, posted a mixed performance, said BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage in its daily market update.

Telecommunication booked the highest gain of 0.70 percent, while banking 0.19 percent and engineering 0.06 percent.

However, pharmaceuticals recorded a loss of 0.53 percent, alongside fuel and power (0.55 percent), food and allied (1.07 percent), and NBFI (1.50 percent).

Stylecraft Limited topped the gainers' chart, increasing 9.89 percent.

Information Services Network, Safko Spinning Mills, Zahintex Industries, Midland Bank, Legacy Footwear, Jute Spinners, Zaheen Spinning and Kay & Que (Bangladesh) performed well.

National Feed Mills shed the most, losing 6.90 percent.

Premier Leasing & Finance, First Finance, Chartered Life Insurance Company, Phoenix Finance and Investments, Associated Oxygen, Prime Insurance Company and Janata Insurance also suffered losses.

Trump vows big tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China

AFP, Washington

US President-elect Donald Trump said Monday he intends to impose sweeping tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada and China, prompting a swift warning from Beijing that "no one will win a trade war."

In a series of posts to his Truth Social account, Trump vowed to hit some of the United States' largest trading partners with duties on all goods entering the country.

"On January 20th, as one of my many first Executive Orders, I will sign all necessary documents to charge Mexico and Canada a 25 percent tariff on ALL products coming into the United States," he wrote.

In another post, Trump said he would also be slapping China with a 10 percent tariff, "above any additional Tariffs," in response to what he said was its failure to tackle fentanyl smuggling.

Tariffs are a key part of Trump's economic agenda, with the Republican vowing wide-ranging duties on allies and adversaries alike while he was on the campaign trail.

Both China and Canada issued swift responses, each calling their trade relationships with the United States

"mutually beneficial."

"No one will win a trade war," Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for China's embassy in the United States, told AFP by email, defending Beijing's efforts to curb fentanyl smuggling.

"China believes that China-US

economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature," Liu added. Canada said it was "essential" to US energy supplies, and insisted the relationship benefits American workers.

"We will of course continue to discuss these issues with the incoming



In this file photo, Donald Trump attends a campaign event in Allentown, Pennsylvania. In a series of posts to his Truth Social account, Trump vowed to hit some of the United States' largest trading partners with duties on all goods entering the country.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE