

France to introduce digital tax if no EU deal

Paris, France

France will forge ahead with its own tax on digital giants in 2019 if the EU fails to agree on how to get the likes of Google and Facebook to pay more tax in Europe, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Thursday.

Le Maire told France 2 television he would give himself "until March" to reach a deal with other EU members on a digital tax, nicknamed the GAFA tax after Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon.

If the talks fail, "we will do it at the national level in 2019: we will tax digital giants if European states do not take their responsibilities," he said.

The measure, set to come into force in 2021 if a global plan has not been agreed by then, would chiefly target Google and Facebook, which dominate the online advertising market in Europe.

Cuba scraps some private sector restrictions

La Habana, Cuba

Havana on Wednesday announced it was scrapping some tough new restrictions on the private sector that had been set to take effect at the end of this week and had caused concerns among entrepreneurs.

Speaking on national television, Labour Minister Margarita Gonzalez said the government recognised that 20 new rules, first published in the island's official gazette in July, had led to some unease among business owners and some of them would be revised.

The most controversial rule, which would have allowed only one business license per person and per location, is among those that have been dropped.

OPEC plans output cuts



Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih (C) speaks to journalists as he attends the 175th OPEC Conference of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna

AFP | Vienna, Austria

OPEC members and other oil-producing countries mulled cuts in output yesterday to prop up plunging prices, amid repeated calls by US President Donald Trump that they keep the taps open.

"We're looking for a sufficient cut to balance the market, equally distributed between countries," Saudi oil minister Khalid al-Falih told reporters ahead of an OPEC meeting in the Austrian capital.

Oil ministers from 20 or so countries are in Vienna for two days of meetings -- first, the 15

members of OPEC, then a wider group including countries outside the cartel -- to discuss how to counter the tumble in prices over the past two months.

"We don't need permission from anyone to cut. The US is not in a position to tell us what to do"

KHALID AL-FALIH
SAUDI OIL MINISTER

On Wednesday, Trump took to Twitter to urge producers to keep pumping.

Saudi minister al-Falih pointedly said Washington should back off.

"We don't need permission from anyone to cut," he said.

The US "is not in a position to tell us what to do," he added.

At the end of 2016, OPEC's regular members joined forces with other countries -- most notably Russia -- to scale back output in a bid to reduce a glut that was weighing on prices.

OPEC daily output stood at 32.99 million barrels in October, according to the International Energy Agency.

New inspection scandal for Nissan

Tokyo, Japan

Nissan plans to conduct another recall owing to "improper" tests on new vehicles, a newspaper said yesterday, dealing a fresh blow to the Japanese car giant following the shock arrest of former chairman Carlos Ghosn.

The latest issue was uncov-

ered after transport ministry officials conducted on-site inspections at Nissan's major assembly plants, the Nikkei business daily said.

Several employees admitted they carried out "improper" tests on brake and other systems before shipment, the newspaper said, without spec-

ifying how many cars were affected.

Nissan plans to make an announcement on the case later this month and is considering recalling any vehicles improperly tested, it added.

Immediate confirmation of the report was not available.

Electric driverless truck on public road

Graphic News

Swedish autonomous vehicle start-up Einride and German logistics group DB Schenker are set to gain regulatory approval, allowing an all-electric, driverless truck to carry freight on a public road.

The two groups said the permit would be a world first, enabling the commercial operation of a battery-powered truck to operate without a driver, following a pilot phase in operation since early November.

Einride and DB Schenker each said they expected to gain the permit by January.

The battery-electric T-pod can provide emission-free transportation at a cost that's competitive with conventional diesel trucks, Einride claims.

The T-pod, designed to carry up to 15 standard European pallets, is about 7 metres long and weighs 20 tonnes at full capacity. Its battery capacity

is 200 kilowatt hours, enabling a range of about 200km on a single charge.

In Sweden, Einride is developing a T-pod route with charging infrastructure between Gothenburg and Helsingborg, cities separated by about 200km. Einride aims to have 200 T-pods operating on that route by 2020.

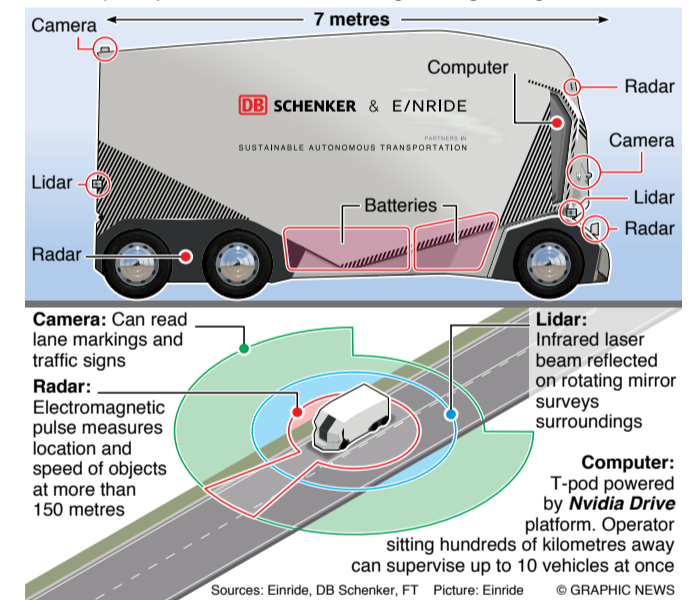
The Stockholm-based company described the T-pod's self-driving capabilities as Level 4 autonomy, meaning the vehicle can handle all aspects of driving under certain conditions without the need for a driver to intervene. The T-pod uses lidar and radar sensors and a machine vision system to track its surroundings.

Einride plans to begin operating with one remote driver per vehicle on the road, but over time, the company aims to expand that ratio until each remote driver is overseeing about 10 vehicles.



Einride, which is operating pilot project in Jonkoping, hopes fleet of 200 T-Pods will connect cities of Gothenburg and Helsingborg, 200km apart, by 2020

T-POD SPECIFICATIONS
Top speed: 85km/hr
Cargo capacity: 15 standard pallets
Weight with full cargo: 20 tonnes
Battery capacity: 200kWh
Range on single charge: 200km



Sources: Einride, DB Schenker, FT Picture: Einride © GRAPHIC NEWS

China furious at Huawei executive's arrest in Canada

● US detains Huawei's chief financial officer over suspected Iran sanctions violations

● Meng was arrested in the western city of Vancouver on December 1

● US is seeking her extradition

● Huawei said it was unaware of any wrongdoing by Meng

AFP | Beijing, China



Woman uses her mobile phone in front of a Huawei logo at Beijing International Consumer Electronics Expo in Beijing.

was arrested in Canada following a US extradition request, threatening to rattle a trade war truce with the United States.

The detention of Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, comes after American authorities reportedly launched

an investigation into suspected Iran sanctions violations by Huawei, which was already under scrutiny by US intelligence officials who deemed the company a national security threat.

The arrest stirred tensions just as the United States and Chi-

na agreed to a ceasefire in their trade spat while negotiators seek a deal within three months.

"We have made solemn representations to Canada and the US, demanding that both parties immediately clarify the reasons for the detention, and

immediately release the detainee to protect the person's legal rights," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a regular press briefing in Beijing.

Meng was arrested in the western city of Vancouver on December 1, Canada's ministry of justice said in a statement on Wednesday, prompting China's embassy to say it had "seriously harmed the human rights of the victim".

The ministry said the US is seeking her extradition and she faces a bail hearing on Friday, adding it could not provide further details due to a publication ban that was sought by Meng, whose father, Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei, is a former Chinese People's Liberation Army engineer.

Huawei, which overtook Apple as the world's number two smartphone maker this year, said it was unaware of any wrongdo-

ing by Meng and was provided "very little information" about the charges.

"Huawei complies with all applicable laws and regulations where it operates, including applicable export control and sanction laws and regulations of the UN, US and EU," the company said in a statement.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported in April that the US Department of Justice had opened an investigation into suspected violations of Iran sanctions by Huawei.

The *New York Times* said the company had been subpoenaed by the US Commerce and Treasury Departments over alleged violations of Iran and North Korea sanctions.

The arrest occurred on the same day that US President Donald Trump and Xi struck the trade war truce at a summit in Argentina.