How the House of Lords Goes About Business

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

EUROPE EDITION VOL. XXXII NO. 200 \$1.75 (C/V) - KES 250 - NAI 375 - £1.70

DOW JONES WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

WSJ.com

Europe Marks 96th Anniversary of WW1's End



A young girl dressed as a 'poilu,' a World War I-era French soldier, joined an Armistice Day ceremony in Lyon on Tuesday as Europe marked the 96th anniversary of the end of 'The Great War

U.S. and China Ready Trade, Military Deals

By Jeremy Page AND CAROL E. LEE

BEIJING-U.S. President Barack Obama and China's Xi Jinping were set to unveil two agreements designed to avert military confrontations, U.S. officials said, as the two leaders try to move beyond tensions that have dominated recent relations.

One of the military agreements covers a mechanism for notifying each other of major activities, such as military exercises, and the other sets rules of behavior for encounters at sea and in the air, according to people familiar with the negotiations.

A day earlier, ahead of his two-day summit with Mr. Xi, Mr. Obama said their governments had resolved lingering differences on a deal to drop tariffs on semiconductors and

China Trade

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other information-technology products, which backers say could cover \$1 trillion in trade.

Negotiators worked to conclude the pact along the sidelines of a gathering of Asian-Pacific leaders in Beijing hosted by Mr. Xi, which also served as a prelude to the summit.

Climate change is another area the two leaders are expected to reach agreement on Wednesday. And Monday, each side announced new, longer-term visas for business and education to facilitate travel and commerce.

The military and trade agreements are rare signs of progress on core issues in the rocky relationship. The U.S.is trying to consolidate influence in Asia, while Beijing is determined to make China the region's pre-eminent military and economic power.

Relations have foundered over the past year on cyberspying, democracy demonstrations in the Chinese territory of Hong Kong and China's rough-elbowed approach to territorial disputes with Japan and the Philippines, both U.S. allies. Discord between Messrs. Xi and Obama was also apparent at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, during which they championed rival free-trade

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Private-Equity Firms Vie For Cement Businesses

By Shayndi Raice

more than \$10 billion of cement facilities being sold as part of the merger of two large European companies, reflecting the dearth of buyout deals available in the region.

The sale of the cement assets in Europe, Canada, Brazil and the Philippines is a precondition to winning antitrust approval of a \$50 billion merger between French cement giant Lafarge SA and Swiss rival **Holcim** Ltd.

The assets have attracted interest among cash-flush private-equity firms. Some 60 parties, a mix of buyout firms and building-materials com-

panies, have submitted bids for all or some assets, said LONDON—Private-equity Holcim finance chief Thomas firms are jostling to acquire Aebischer. Private-equity bidinclude Blackstone Group LP, KKR & Co. and other top firms, say people familiar with the matter.

The intense interest partly reflects the relative scarcity of European buyout opportunities. So far this year, private-equity firms have entered into \$68 billion of deals in Europe, essentially flat from the same period a year ago, according to data provider Dealogic.

The cement assets on the block are also a nice fit for private-equity firms. Many funds specialize in scooping up so-called primary assets

that are often sold directly by companies. Buyout experts say such assets typically are easier to profit from than businesses that are sold by rival private-equity firms. That is because firms typically extract as many synergies as possible before selling, leaving little opportunity for downsizing—and thus less potential for profit—for the next owner.

One person familiar with the deal said a likely outcome could be that Holcim and Lafarge sell the bulk of the assets to a private-equity consortium while also selling one Please turn to page 18

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Banks Set to Settle Forex Investigations

By David Enrich AND JOHN LETZING

LONDON—After U.S., British and Swiss regulators penalize big banks for alleged improprieties in the foreignexchange markets, as expected Wednesday, individual bank employees are next in line for scrutiny.

Regulators planned to announce a series of settlements, starting at 6 a.m. in London, with total penalties against seven banks likely exceeding \$2 billion, according to people familiar with the discussions. The settlements still awaited approval from some banks' boards as of Tuesday evening, the people added.

Among the biggest losers: **UBS** AG, which faces the big-

gest penalty from the U.K., at a bit less than £300 million (about \$478 million), as well as a separate Swiss enforcement action, one person said.

The settlements are likely to fault banks for inade quately supervising their traders and other employees and lacking sufficient controls to prevent them from engaging in allegedly improper behavior, including trading for their own personal accounts, in the foreign-exchange markets, these people say.

Wednesday's settlements won't target any individuals, these people say. The U.K.'s settlement documents, for example, aren't likely to name or otherwise identify individuals, one person said.

But actions against indi-Please turn to page 18