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**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

WSJ.com

EUROPE NEWS | JUNE 9, 2011

## IMF Candidate Presses Case in China

*France's Lagarde Continues to Seek Support Outside Europe; Emerging Nations Hesitate to Declare*

By AARON BACK And WILLIAM HOROBIN

BEIJING—French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde met with top Chinese economic policymakers, but Beijing offered no immediate indication whether it is ready to back her bid to lead the International Monetary Fund.

At a news conference early Thursday in Beijing, Ms. Lagarde said she was "very satisfied" with her visit. She said she believes the IMF job selection should proceed "irrespective of nationality," and that she agrees with Beijing that the process should be open, transparent and merit-based.

Ms. Lagarde is on a tour of developing nations, seeking to secure their backing in her bid to lead the organization, which has faced criticism for the tradition that it is always headed by a European. Before traveling to China on Wednesday, she was welcomed by officials in India and Brazil, who also declined to give explicit support for her candidacy.



Christine Lagarde will begin to answer inquiries through Facebook and Twitter, as she seeks every possible outlet to bolster her campaign for the top IMF job. WSJ's Grainne McCarthy joins from Paris with the story.

In a packed agenda Wednesday, Ms. Lagarde had lunch with Chinese central bank Governor Zhou Xiaochuan, met with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Vice Premier Wang Qishan in the afternoon, and was scheduled to have dinner with Finance Minister Xie Xuren, according to a French Embassy official.

A French government spokesman said last month that Ms. Lagarde's bid had China's backing, but Beijing hasn't endorsed anyone publicly, and on Wednesday officials here remained noncommittal.

Mr. Yang said after his meeting with Ms. Lagarde that he had "listened carefully" as she "explained to me the purpose of her candidacy," according to a second French Embassy official. "It's an

open field now. There are quite a few people campaigning," Mr. Yang said, according to the official.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Ms. Lagarde as telling Vice Premier Wang: "I am here not to officially ask for China's backing, but I hope to introduce my bid." "China is very important for the IMF," it quoted her as saying. Xinhua, citing a press release from Mr. Wang's office, said the two "exchanged views" on issues including the upcoming Group of 20 summit in Cannes, and the reform of international financial organizations and "international economic norms and standards." The report didn't elaborate.

Ms. Lagarde has emerged as a front-runner to succeed Dominique Strauss-Kahn as managing director of the IMF after securing the backing of several European nations, whose voting power at the institution still is disproportionate to



their economic weight.

"While the arithmetic of votes is strongly in her favor, winning the support of the key emerging markets could be important for Lagarde's legitimacy and effectiveness as managing director of the fund," said Eswar Prasad, a former ranking economist at the IMF who is now at Cornell University.

China wasn't expected to endorse Ms. Lagarde immediately upon her visit, and it's still quite possible Beijing will back her. Chinese officials have said only that the selection should be based on "fairness, transparency, and merit," and that the IMF's senior management

should better represent emerging markets. But Zhu Min, a former vice governor of China's central bank, is already a member of senior management as a senior adviser to the IMF's managing director, and was expected to be named deputy managing director before the Strauss-Kahn scandal started.

With a Friday deadline looming to declare one's candidacy, the other major candidate is Mexican central bank governor Agustín Carstens, who is embarking on his own tour of Asian nations this week.

Ms. Lagarde was scheduled to give a press briefing in Beijing Thursday morning. In addition, acting IMF managing director John Lipsky is in Beijing this week for consultations with Chinese officials on the state of the Chinese economy and financial sector. Mr. Lipsky was slated to hold a separate news briefing on Thursday.



Bloomberg News

Christine Lagarde in India on Tuesday.

Ms. Lagarde will also take questions on Twitter and Facebook on Thursday as she seeks every possible outlet to bolster her campaign.

Readers of her [Twitter feed](#) and fans on [Facebook](#) can send in questions before the session officially begins at 1 p.m. ET Thursday. "An hour is not a long time!" her Facebook page says, adding she personally will answer the questions.

Ms. Lagarde has tweeted around 70 times to her burgeoning band of followers during her tour of emerging economies.

"India seems willing to consider my candidacy," she tweeted Wednesday, despite no clear official backing from India's government after meetings with Ms. Lagarde in New Delhi. The meeting with India's Prime Minister and Finance Minister, who invited Ms. Lagarde to lunch, was "very friendly," she tweeted.

On Friday, Ms. Lagarde will meet African officials during an African Development Bank Conference in Portugal, before travelling to Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the weekend.

Her choice of Twitter to keep up links to the rest of the world as she travels may turn out to be a savvy one.

In May, 140 politicians tracked by French pollster TNS Sofres got over a million mentions on Twitter, almost twice as much as in April and almost three times the volume recorded in January, though the surge is mainly due to the explosion of tweets on Mr. Strauss-Kahn's arrest on a sexual-assault charge and his resignation from the IMF.

—Owen Fletcher contributed to this article.

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