The logo for ExxonMobil appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, April 23, 2018. (AP)

## ExxonMobil lifts spending on emission reduction plan to $15b

ExxonMobil says it is boosting its spending on greenhouse gas emission-reduction projects to $15 billion over the next six years and anticipates meeting its 2025 greenhouse gas emission-reduction plans by the end of this year.

The energy giant said the $15 billion will go toward projects focused at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from existing operations and increased investments in the low carbon solutions business.

As part of its greenhouse gas emission-reduction plans, ExxonMobil anticipates year-end 2021 results showing a reduction of 15% to 20% in greenhouse gas intensity from upstream operations compared to 2016 levels, four years ahead of schedule. The company said the figure is supported by an anticipated reduction of 40% to 50% in methane intensity and 35% to 45% in flaring intensity compared to 2016.

Looking ahead, ExxonMobil said that it expects to lower absolute corporate-wide greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 20% by 2030. It foresees a 70% to 80% reduction in corporate-wide methane intensity and 60% to 70% reduction in corporate-wide flaring intensity by that year.

ExxonMobil's announcement comes at a time of increasing scrutiny on escalating gas prices and the use of oil reserves. Last week President Joe Biden ordered a record 50 million barrels of oil released from America's strategic reserve, looking to bring down gasoline and other costs.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is an emergency stockpile to preserve access to oil in case of natural disasters, national security issues and other events. (AP)

**Market** Movements 01-12-2021

| | | | Change | Closing pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAUDI | - | Tadawul | +88.16 | 10,849.96 |
| JAPAN | - | Nikkei | +113.86 | 27,935.62 |
| UK | - | FTSE 100 | +109.23 | 7,168.68 |
| EUROPE | - | Euro Stoxx 50 | +116.09 | 4,179.15 |
| UAE | - | DFM | +12.97 | 3,072.91 |
| EGYPT | - | EGX 30 | +24.40 | 11,420.00 |
| INDIA | - | Sensex | +619.92 | 57,684.79 |
| PAKISTAN | - | KSE 100 | +296.76 | 45,369.14 |
| SINGAPORE | - | Straits Times STI | +56.96 | 3,098.25 |

| | | | Change | Closing pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PHILIPPINES | - | PSEi | -253.82 | 6,947.06 |

# Business

# US consumer confidence hits 9-mth low

### Sentiment clipped by rising prices and lingering concerns about COVID

**WASHINGTON, Dec 1, (AP): U.S. consumer confidence fell to a nine-month low in November, clipped by rising prices and concern about the coronavirus.**

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its consumer confidence index dropped to a reading of 109.5, down from 111.6 in October. It was the lowest reading since the index stood at 95.2 in February.

The survey was completed on Nov. 19 and would not include the ramifications of omicron, a new variant of the coronavirus that has begun to spread with few solid answers about the damage it might do to the U.S. and global economies.

Even before the omicron variant appeared, consumer optimism was being tested by price spikes across the board, particularly for gasoline and food.

The Conference Board's present situation index, which measures consumers' assessment of current business and labor conditions, fell to 142.5, down from 145.5 in October. The expectations index, based consumers' outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, fell to 87.6 in November from 89.0 in October.

The Conference Board said that concerns about rising prices and to a lesser degree, lingering worries about the delta variant, were the primary drivers of the November decline.

But economists believe rising prices and any jolt from the omicron variant will not have a major impact on holiday spending this year, something that can have a sizable impact on the U.S. economy.

Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said she expected the omicron variant would have only a "moderate negative impact on growth." She is looking for the overall economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, to expand at an annual rate of 7.9% in the current quarter ending in December, a big improvement from the lackluster 2.1% GDP gain in the July-September quarter.

The decline in the Conference Board confidence index followed an even bigger drop reported last week in the University of Michigan's gauge of consumer sentiment, which fell in November to a decade-low of 7.4, compared to a final October reading of 71.7.

The smaller decline in the Conference Board survey reflects the fact that this index places more emphasis on the labor market, which has been performing well this year.

### Central bank may accelerate pullback in economic support

## Fed to tighten credit faster than expected, Powell warns

WASHINGTON, Dec 1, (AP): Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell took a sharp and unexpected turn Tuesday toward tightening credit for consumers and businesses in the face of mounting concerns about high inflation.

Powell signaled that the Fed will likely act more quickly to phase out its ultra-low-interest rate policies even as the emergence of the new omicron variant of COVID-19 has raised fresh doubts about the future of the economy and the direction of inflation.

The Fed chair told the Senate Banking Committee that the central bank's policymakers will discuss at their next meeting in mid-December whether to accelerate the reduction of their monthly bond purchases, which have been intended to lower long-term borrowing costs. The Fed just announced those reductions in early November at a pace that would end the bond buying in June. But on Tuesday, Powell signaled that the Fed is inclined to end those purchases several months before then.

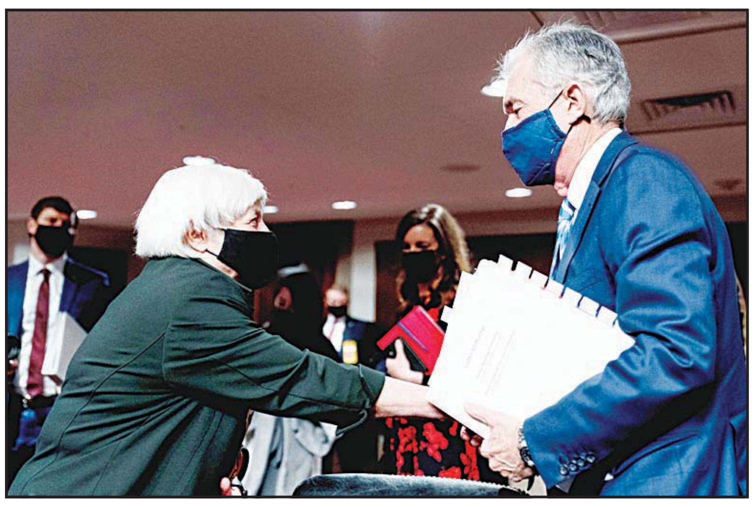
Doing so would put the Fed on a path to begin raising its key short-term interest rate as early as the first half of next year. That rate has been pegged at nearly zero since last March, when the coronavirus sent the economy into a deep recession. A higher Fed rate would, in turn, raise borrowing costs for mortgages, credit cards and some business loans.

Stock prices tumbled after Powell's comments, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost more than 650 points, or nearly 2%, for the day. Very low interest rates, nurtured by the Fed, have been a key factor in driving share prices to all-time highs since the pandemic struck.

"He was decidedly more hawkish in tone than I expected and, I think, than the financial markets expected," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. financial economist at Oxford Economics. (Hawks generally favor higher borrowing costs to quell inflation, while doves typically emphasize lower rates to fuel hiring.)

Fed policymakers have come under pressure from a sharp jump in inflation, with consumer prices having soared 6.2% in October from a year earlier, the highest such inflation rate in 31 years. In response, some Fed officials in recent weeks had already started to push for a faster tapering of the central bank's bond purchases.

Yet the sudden emergence of the omicron variant had led some Fed-watchers to speculate that the central bank would avoid any major policy shifts until a clearer picture of the variant and its likely impact on the economy emerged. But Powell's remarks Tuesday - and the questions he faced from senators - were far more focused on inflation than on the likelihood that omicron, about which little is known, could seriously weaken the economy.



Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen shakes hands with Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, right, following a Senate Banking Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. (AP)

"The economy is very strong, and inflationary pressures are high," Powell said. "It is therefore appropriate, in my view, to consider wrapping up the taper of our asset purchases ... perhaps a few months sooner."

"This is a very abrupt pivot from the Fed," said Krishna Guha, an analyst at the investment bank Evercore ISI. "The eight-month taper plan was only announced four weeks ago."

Under fire from some Senate Republicans about worsening inflation, Powell suggested that price increases will likely slow next year as supply bottlenecks ease. But he also acknowledged that price increases have been spreading to broader categories of products and services, and as a result "the risk of higher inflation has increased."

For months, Powell and other Fed officials had described inflation as "transitory," which did not necessarily mean they thought it would disappear soon but that it wouldn't keep spiraling higher. That outlook has so far proved too optimistic, and Powell said it is "probably a good time to retire that word and try to explain more clearly what we mean."

The Fed chair said he thought the central bank's policymakers will know more about the potential economic impact of the omicron variant in time for their next meeting in mid-December.

Regardless of the eventual consequences, the omicron variant seems sure to make Powell's job more complicated next year. If omicron leads to another wave of factory and port shutdowns in the United States and overseas, supply chain bottlenecks could worsen and raise prices even more.

At the same time, omicron could renew fears among many workers about becoming infected on the job, leading to more resignations when quits are already at a record high or discouraging some of those out of work from taking a new job. That could weaken the job market and the economy. Under such a scenario, the Fed's dual mandates of stable prices and maximum employment could come into conflict.

In a significant shift, Powell appeared to make inflation-fighting a more urgent priority than job growth by noting that higher prices themselves threaten the economic recovery. And a long period of growth, he said, is needed to regain the "great labor market" that existed before the pandemic.

"We're going to need a long expansion," the Fed chair said. "To get that, we're going to need price stability, and in a sense, the risk of persistent high inflation is also a major risk to getting back to such a labor market."

## Inflation in Kuwait rose 3.17% in July

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): The consumer prices on an annual basis grew by 3.17 percent in July, according to the State of Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau.

In a statement to KUNA on Wednesday, the bureau indicated that inflation rate in Kuwait increased by 0.25 percent on a monthly basis due to rise of prices of some main groups that influence movement of the key indices.

It added that the consumer price index (CPI) for the food and beverage group rose by 10 percent last July in comparison to the same period last year, whereas group of cigarette and tobacco remained the same at 135 point on an annual basis.

The clothing group rose by 6.52 percent and housing services increased slightly by 0.17 percent, while furnishings climbed 3.7 percent. As for medical group, it rose by 2.27 percent and transportation surged by 5.4 percent.

The communications group increased by 4.6 percent, and recreation and culture surged by 8.25 percent, whereas education group declined by 15.46 percent.

Restaurants and hotels increased on yearly basis by 0.9 percent, commodities and miscellaneous goods by 3.94 percent.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure that examines the average change in prices over time that consumers pay for a basket of goods and services, and is used for identifying periods of inflation and deflation.

## China manufacturing improves

BEIJING, Dec 1, (AP): China's manufacturing activity rebounded in November as orders improved and power shortages eased, a survey showed Tuesday.

An industry group and the national statistics agency said a monthly purchasing managers' index rose to 50.1 from October's 49.2 on a 100-point scale. The index spent the previous two months below 50, which shows activity decreasing.

A measure of production rose 3.6 points to 52, indicating activity was recovering from power rationing imposed in major manufacturing areas in September to meet official energy efficiency targets.

"Industrial activity rebounded this month thanks to easing disruptions from power shortages," said Sheana Yue of Capital Economics in a report.

In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, a worker cleans a piano at a production factory of Parsons Music Corporation in Yichang in central China's Hubei Province, Nov 23, 2021. (AP)

Reinforcing its reputation as a trusted institution in the equities market

## Markaz Appointed as Market Maker for Land United Real Estate and Gulf Cable & Electrical Industries

Azzam Al-Otaibi

***Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced that it has been appointed as a Market Marker for the shares of Land United Real Estate Company "Land" and Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries Company "Cable". Markaz will provide its specialized market making services to boost the trading of the two companies' shares on Boursa Kuwait.***

In its role as a Market Marker, Markaz will support Land and Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries in increasing the volume of trading on their shares and boosting liquidity, thereby contributing to their growth and stability in the market. It will facilitate the buying and selling of the two companies' shares by investors and traders through increasing their access to trading opportunities by continuously quoting the competitive prices and providing liquidity. Markaz also seeks to create the much-needed balance, in the case where there is a high supply of shares and low demand, and vice versa.

Commenting on the announcement, Mr. Azzam Al-Otaibi, Assistant Manager, MENA Equities at Markaz, stated: "We are pleased that Markaz has been designated to provide market making services for LAND and Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries. This appointment reflects the trust of the market in Markaz's capabilities as a Market Maker with a proven track record in creating significant value for companies and traders alike. It also confirms that our market making services are in line with best international standards and are managed by a qualified team consisting of trading experts and specialists."

"The appointment also comes as a testament to our ongoing commitment and constant efforts to drive the development of the Kuwaiti market. Working closely with Boursa Kuwait, we are striving to boost transactions and investments to improve liquidity. We will continue to explore new opportunities to further our contributions to the financial markets sector and the wider national economy," added Mr. Al-Otaibi.

Mr. Al-Otaibi said that the Market Maker services aim to create a balance between supply and demand and reduce the spread between bid and ask prices. This can result in greater revenues for companies benefitting from these services. It also might positively impact the companies' borrowing costs, the value of company shares and the ability to trade at fairer values. In addition, market maker services support the overall development of the Kuwait economy by encouraging other companies to list their shares on the national exchange.

Earlier this year, the Capital Markets Authority of Kuwait granted a license to Markaz to operate as a Market Maker, following which it started providing market making services to Boursa Kuwait and Aleid Foods Company.

## Nine embassies of South East Asian celebrate family day after two years since COVID-19 pandemic


Nine embassies of South East Asian and members of the ASEAN gathered together Saturday morning to celebrate family day after two years since COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Ambassadors, Charges D' Affaires, diplomats and nationals of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam spent half day at the grounds of Kuwait University engaged in sports, fun games, exercise and lavish food spread.

Chair person of the ASEAN Community in Kuwait Ambassador of Cambodia His Excellency Hun Han opened the event with a brief speech highlighted the role of ASEAN in the world and its close ties and harmonious relationship with Kuwait. He also welcomed and presented a plaque of appreciation to special guest Mr. Saleh Al- Sarawy, Adviser to the Department of Asia Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait. Al-Sarawy with the Ambassadors and Charges D' Affaires toured the food stalls of ASEAN Embassies. Philippine Zumba group Z Pablik delivered a power packed workout with set of nine songs from different ASEAN countries much to the delight and pride of the nationals. Fun games immediately followed with musical chair, longest breath, balloon race and a traditional Filipino street game called "Patintero". A question and answer game took the highlight of the event, in which questions were raised by Ambassadors and CDAs focused on the ASEAN. Prizes were donated by each embassy.

Ambassador Hun Han delivered the closing remarks and thanked everyone for the effort of putting together such a successful event in short span of time. He hopes that camaraderie and harmonious friendship will continue among the ASEAN members and the host country Kuwait. The event was hosted by Ricky Lax, CEE Network Project Manager, journalist at The Times and TV News correspondent for GMA 7 News and Current Affairs.