

Friday December 23, 2011

NEWS UPDATE

Stock Markets Rap (as of Dec 22)

	Close	Chg	(%)
Dow	12,170	+62	+0.5
Nasdaq	2,599	+21	+0.8
S&P 500	1,254	+10	+0.8
Global Dow	1,791	+14	+0.8
VIX	21.16	-0.27	-1.3

	Close	Chg	(%)
FTSE 100	5,457	+67	+1.2
DAX	5,852	+61	+1.0
CAC	3,072	+41	+1.4

	Close	Chg	(%)
ASX 200	4,091	-49	-1.2
Nikkei	8,395	-65	-0.8
Shanghai	2,186	-5	-0.2
HSI	18,378	-38	-0.2
H Shares	9,945	-6	-0.1
FTSE STI	2,665	-9	-0.3
SET	1,043	-1	-0.1
LSX	907	+11	+1.2
Vietnam	360	-7	-2.0

Currencies Rap (as of Dec 22)

	Last	Chg	(%)
DXY	79.93	-0.10	-0.12
THB/USD	31.26	+0.01	+0.03
THB/LAK	256.54	-0.27	-0.11
LAK/USD	8,019.50	-6.00	-0.07
USD/EUR	1.3057	-0.00	-0.36
JPY/USD	78.11	+0.29	+0.37

Commodities Rap (as of Dec 22)

	Close	Chg	(%)
Gold	1,610.60	-3.00	-0.19
Silver	29.05	-0.20	-0.69
WTI	99.53	+0.86	+0.87
Brent	107.89	+0.18	+0.17
BDI	1,787	-69	-3.72

Source: Bloomberg

US: Jobless Claims Drop, GDP Rise Less Than Estimated

The number of applications for U.S. unemployment benefits unexpectedly dropped last week to 364,000, the lowest since April 2008, according to the Labor Department. Meanwhile, U.S. gross domestic product climbed at a 1.8 percent annual rate in the third quarter, less than previously estimated, revised Commerce Department figures showed. [\[Bloomberg\]](#)

US: Republicans Agree to End Payroll Tax Deadlock

House Speaker John Boehner agreed to extend a U.S. payroll-tax cut past its Dec. 31 expiration, backing down under pressure from Senate Republicans and President Barack Obama. The agreement capped a month of wrangling that led to a revolt by House Republicans over a two-month bipartisan deal passed by the Senate Dec. 17 in an 89-10 vote. Amid polling that showed Republicans losing ground politically during the standoff, Obama and Senate Republicans urged Boehner to bring his caucus to agreement. Boehner said at a news conference in Washington yesterday his members decided to "do the right thing for the American people even if it's not exactly what we want." [\[Bloomberg\]](#)

Italy Parliament Votes to Seal Austerity Budget

Italy's Senate passed a vote of confidence in the government of Prime Minister Mario Monti on Thursday that put the final seal on an emergency austerity budget rushed through to restore market confidence in the euro zone's third biggest economy. The upper house voted 257 to 41 for the government, following a similar easy win in the lower house last week. The budget is intended to reverse a collapse of market confidence which has pushed Italy's borrowing costs to untenable levels and put it at the heart of Europe's debt crisis. [\[Reuters\]](#)

Chinese Vice President Meets Thai Prime Minister on Relations

Visiting Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping met here Thursday with Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to discuss the strengthening of relations between their two countries. Xi said that China attaches great importance to friendly cooperation with Thailand and that his current three-day visit is aimed at cementing the traditional friendship and promoting pragmatic cooperation. Yingluck agreed with Xi's suggestions on developing bilateral relations and views on East Asia cooperation. [\[Xinhua\]](#)

Burma to See 50% Hike in Power Fees

An announcement that electricity prices in Burma will rise 50 percent in 2012 has sparked alarm among small business-owners and families who claim the government is seeking to profit on the exploitation of the country's poorest. The move will see cost per unit for businesses jump from 50 kyat (\$US0.05) to 75 kyat, and 25 kyat to 35 kyat for domestic use. [\[Democratic Voice of Burma\]](#)

Laos to Build 41 Special Economic Zones

According to a report from the National Committee for Special and Specific Economic Zone Management Secretariat Office, the government has listed 41 areas as special and specific economic zones, of which 25 will be built over the next 10 years. The government lacks the necessary funds to build infrastructure in the special zones so it is seeking foreign direct investment to develop these areas. Laos is already in the process of setting up six special and specific economic zones. [\[Vientiane Times\]](#)

Laos Moves Closer to WTO Membership

Laos has gained two more votes in its bid to become a member of the World Trade Organisation after reaching bilateral agreements with the European Union and Chinese Taiwan. The extra votes are a milestone in Laos' efforts to integrate its economy with the world community, which would make it possible for Lao enterprises to access a larger market and bring in more foreign investment. According to a press release from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Laos reached the bilateral agreements with the European Union and Chinese Taiwan last week after several years of intense negotiations. Laos is continuing negotiations with Ukraine to conclude all of its required bilateral agreements. Ukraine is the final country with which Laos has to complete negotiations before it can be accepted as a WTO member. Laos has reached bilateral trade agreements with a number of countries including China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Canada. The Lao government hopes to become a WTO member before the Asia-Europe Meeting Summit scheduled for next November. [\[Vientiane Times\]](#)

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