

U.S. stocks mixed, starting busy earnings week on weak note

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (Xinhua) -- U.S. stocks closed mixed Friday on news of Dell's possible privatization and reports of Apple's reduced orders for iPhone 5 parts as a busy earnings week of large companies and banks kicked off.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 19.27 points, or 0.14 percent, to 13,507.70. The broader S&P 500 Index lost 1.35 points, or 0.09 percent, to 1,470.70. The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index shed 8.13 points, or 0.26 percent, to 3,117.50.

The market spent most of the morning session in the negative territory, dragged down by news that Apple cut orders for its iPhone 5's screens and other parts on concerns about sluggish demand.

Shares of Apple, the most valuable U.S. company, slumped 3.56 percent and briefly touched a low of 498.51 dollars per share, its lowest level since last February, in early trading.

In response, the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index snapped a three-day winning streak and closed in the red ink, while the tech sector led the fall among the S&P 500's key sectors.

However, the broad indices pared early losses, lifted by a surge of Dell's shares. The personal computer maker is reportedly in talks with private equity firms on a possible buyout. Shares of Dell jumped 12.87 percent to close at 12.29 dollars per share, paring most of the early losses of the broad indices.

Meanwhile, Chicago Fed President Charles Evans struck a positive tone over the U.S. economy, predicting that the world's largest economy would see a growth of 2.5 percent in 2013 and 3.5 percent in 2014. However, the equity market reacted little to his optimistic comments.

Investors are concerned about the brewing battles between the Democrats and Republicans at the Congress over the looming debt-ceiling issue.

On Monday afternoon, President Barack Obama urged the Congress to raise the U.S. debt ceiling in a timely manner to avert dampening investor confidence and derailing the subdued economic recovery.

A congressional refusal to raise the debt ceiling would be a "self-inflicted wound" on the U.S. economy and could possibly tip the country into recession, Obama warned at a press conference held in the White House.

With the new round of earnings season rolling out and no important data scheduled for the day, the market is anticipating fourth-quarter earnings reports from major banks, including Bank of America, J.P. Morgan Chase and Citigroup, later in the week.

J.P. Morgan Chase will release its fourth-quarter earnings Wednesday, but the company now faces law enforcement actions ordered by Federal regulators to improve its risk-management systems and financial and internal audit system following the bank's "London whale" scandal.

In addition, General Electric and Intel will also publicize their quarterly earnings this week.

On other markets, U.S. crude oil prices edged up in choppy trading.

Light, sweet crude for February delivery gained 58 cents, or 0.62 percent to settle at 94.14 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, hitting a four-month high.

Brent crude for February delivery rose 1.24 dollars, or 1.12 percent to close at 111.88 dollars a barrel on the ICE Futures Exchange in London.

The U.S. dollar traded mixed against major currencies as U.S. debt ceiling talks weighed on the market and speculations about further monetary easing measures in Japan continued to grow.

The dollar strengthened against the yen for a fourth straight day. The Bank of Japan is believed to take bold easing measures under pressure of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese cabinet had approved a stimulus package of 20 trillion yen (about 224 billion US dollars) last Friday.

The euro touched a 11-month high versus the dollar during Monday' s trading, mainly on expectations that the eurozone economy may be stabilizing later in the year.

In late New York trading, the euro rose to 1.3379 dollars from 1.3339 dollars of the previous session and the British pound dipped to 1.6087 dollars from 1.6122.

The dollar slightly climbed to 0.9218 Swiss francs from 0.9130 and went down to 0.9837 Canadian dollars from 0.9839. The dollar bought 89.39 Japanese yen, higher than 89.18 in the previous session.