

**BUSINESS & FINANCIAL OVERVIEW**

## S&P 500, Nasdaq close at 5-month high on China trade, global growth optimism

U.S. stocks closed higher Friday, with the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq finishing at five-month highs, as market sentiment was buoyed by encouraging headlines on U.S.-China trade negotiations and Chinese assurances of forthcoming economic stimulus.

The S&P 500 index SPX, +0.37% climbed 14 points, or 0.5%, to 2,822.48 and the Nasdaq Composite Index COMP, +0.34% advanced 57.62 points, 0.8%, to 7,688.53. The Dow Jones Industrial Average DJIA, +0.25% gained 138.93 points, or 0.5%, to 25,848.87.

For the week, the Dow rose 1.6%, its best since Feb. 15 and the Nasdaq rallied 3.8%, the tech-centric index's strongest since Dec. 28, while the S&P 500 added 2.9% for its biggest weekly gain since Nov. 30, according to FactSet data.

Investors digested comments from Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Beijing's No. 2 leader after President Xi Jinping, who expressed optimism that a trade deal between China and the U.S. can be achieved that suits both parties.

He said that the parties may be several weeks away from a tariff agreement, but described China as "very responsible and reasonable." Separately, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, speaking to reporters after his Senate testimony in front of a finance committee, said no date had been set for a meeting between Xi and Trump to complete a deal, adding that "there's still a lot of work to do."

Trade talks between the two of the globe's largest economies has been chief among concerns for investors because an heated war between the two have the potential to hurt economies world-wide.

Li also addressed weakness in the world's second-largest economy and pledged to maintain strong stimulus measures, such as lowering interest rates, cutting bank reserve ratios, and slashing taxes for consumers and businesses, sparking hopes that a stable Chinese economy could stem a recent trend of slowing global growth.

The New York Fed's Empire State index fell to a reading of 3.7 in March from 8.8 in the prior month, a near two-year low. Economists had expected a reading of 10, according to a survey by Econoday.

U.S. industrial production rose by 0.1% in February, below the 0.4% increase expected by economists, according to a MarketWatch poll. January's figure, however, was raised to show a 0.4% drop, rather than a 0.6% decline as previously estimated.

Job openings in the U.S. rose to 7.58 million in January, the third-highest level on record, according to the Labor Department.

Consumer sentiment rose in March to 97.8 from 93.8 in February, according to a preliminary reading of the University of Michigan consumer sentiment index. The reading was above the 95 level expected by economists polled by MarketWatch.

