

Shares hit two-year highs after US Fed move

US and UK shares hit two-year highs as global stock markets reacted positively to the decision by the Federal Reserve to pump \$600bn into the US economy to try to boost its recovery

Both the FTSE and Dow Jones indexes closed up 2 percent, while leading indexes in France and Germany rose sharply. The price of oil also jumped, while the dollar fell against major currencies. Although the Fed's move was widely expected, most analysts had predicted a lower figure of \$500bn to be injected. The price of oil also rose to its highest level since early April, with US light crude gaining \$2 a barrel to \$86.71. London Brent rose by \$1.80 to \$88.19 a barrel.

With more dollar cash in circulation and with the US Government's policy of buying bonds with the

\$600bn putting downward pressure on interest rates, as expected the dollar weakened against major currencies. The euro rose 2 cents against the dollar to \$1.4239, while the pound also rose 2 cents to \$1.6273. The dollar slipped to 80.66 yen, from 81.29 yen.

European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet refused to comment on the Fed's action at the ECB's monthly press conference. However, he did say that he was confident the Fed still supported a strong dollar, despite reports that the second round of quantitative easing was designed to weaken the US



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange

currency, in order to make its exports more competitive. "It is in the interest of the US to have a strong dollar vis-a-vis the other float-

ing currencies," the official noted.

The latest move by the Fed has been dubbed QE2 as it follows the Central

Bank's decision to pump \$1.75tn into the economy during the downturn in its first round of quantitative easing.

Cuts warning over Scottish university places

Scottish universities warning that thousands of student places may disappear if a cut of 16 percent in funding goes ahead

The number of places in Scottish universities this year is down 10 percent. It has emerged principals are expecting to turn away thousands of extra applications next year and cut the number of subjects and courses. The lecturers' University and College Union anticipates this will result in 4,000 job losses.

The predictions come as it emerges English universities are in line for extra income with the Government plans to triple tuition fees to £9,000 a year. Scottish colleges have said the expected budget cut in their sector is so serious they expect some institutions to close.

Liam Burns, President of the National Union of Students in Scotland, said, "A cut of 16 percent across Scottish institutions would have terrible consequences for college and university students. It's absolutely crucial that we invest in education at this time, not make cuts. We must find the investment needed to get better financial help to the poorest students, and protect college and university places. Any cut to colleges would hit bursary funds hard, and take money directly out of the poorest students' pockets."

Singapore 'best country in which to run a business'



Singapore remains the best country in which to run a business, according to an annual report by the World Bank

The Asian nation has come top of the World Bank's *Doing Business 2011* study, which rates 183 countries on the ease in which they allow firms to operate. Judging nations on criteria such as how easy it is to start a business or get credit, the UK came in fourth place, while Chad was bottom.

Published since 2004, the annual *Doing Business* report studies nine main criteria in total. The other seven factors

evaluated are — paying taxes, trading across borders, registering property, dealing with construction permits, closing a business, enforcing contracts and protecting investors. It does not study wider conditions including a country's infrastructure, workforce skills, or security.

Hong Kong came in second place, with New Zealand third, and the US behind the UK in fifth place. All of the top five remained in the same position as a year earlier. Out of the 183 countries surveyed, the World Bank said 117 implemented new business-friendly regulation between

June 2009 and May 2010 — the 12 months covered for the 2011 report.

Report co-author Dahlia Khalifa said, "Singapore has now been top of our survey for the past five years. It is simply the most efficient place from which to import and export. For example, you only need four documents to export and import goods, which remains global best practice. Singapore is also the leader in protecting investors and minority shareholders."

China, now the world's second-largest economy, trailed Singapore in 79th place.

Amedeo Modigliani's painting sells for a record \$68.9m

A painting of a nude by Amedeo Modigliani sold for more than \$68.9m at an auction in New York — a record for the artist's work



A Sotheby's employee discusses merits of the painting

Sotheby's said five bidders competed for *La Belle Romaine*, pushing its price well past its \$40m estimate.

The painting, part of a series of nudes created around 1917, was purchased by an anonymous buyer. Modigliani's previous auction record was 43.2m euros, set earlier this year in Paris. "We are delighted with the results of our sale," said Sotheby's Simon Shaw. "It was a great night for Modigliani... that price represents over four times the price realised when it was sold at Sotheby's in 1999," he added.

Another painting by the

artist — *Jeanne Hebuterne* (au chapeau) — one of the first portraits he painted of his lover, sold for \$19.1m, high above its estimate of \$9-12m. The artist, who lived from 1884 to 1920, originally focused on sculpture but switched to painting in part because of health problems.

Other top-priced works at the Impressionist and Modern Art sale included a canvas from Monet's famous water lily paintings, which fetched \$24.7m and Matisse's *Danseuse Dans le Fauteuil, Sol en Damier*, which sold for \$20.8m.

Canadian couple give away millions in lottery winnings

A Canadian couple who won \$10.9m (£6.7m) in lottery winnings in July say they have given away \$10.2m of the prize to groups in their community

Allen and Violet Large said they were plain country folks who needed no more than 'what we've got'. The two said they had donated about 98 percent of the cash after helping their family.

The elderly pair gave the money to churches, fire departments, cemeteries, the Red Cross and hospitals, where Ms. Large has undergone cancer treatment. "We haven't bought one thing. That's because there is nothing that we need," Mr. Large, 75, said.

Mr. Large, a retired welder from Canada's Nova Scotia province, added that he and his wife were quite content with their 147 year old home and everything else they already owned. "You can't buy happiness," he said.

Citigroup to create 500 jobs



Major financial services company announces it is to create 500 jobs in Belfast over the next five years

The US financial services corporation Citigroup is to employ the staff in its Titanic Quarter hub.

Citigroup first invested in Northern Ireland in 2004 and employs about 1,000 people in Belfast. The announcement was made as the first and deputy first ministers officially opened Citi's new Titanic Quarter offices. First Minister Peter Robinson said the US-NI economic conference in Washington in October helped showcase Northern Ireland to potential investors.

The jobs are described as high-quality roles in the technology and operations divisions, while the remainder will be in the legal and compliance division. The Belfast base mainly services markets in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies