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Pompeo pushes back on U.S. House impeachment inquiry into Trump



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

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Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Thursday, October 17 2019 | www.today-america.com | Southern News Group

Weak U.S. retail sales cast shadow over slowing economy

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. retail sales fell for the first time in seven months in September, suggesting that manufacturing-led weakness could be spreading to the broader economy, keeping the door open for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates again later this month.

The downbeat report from the Commerce Department on Wednesday came on the heels of data this month showing a moderation in job growth and services sector activity in September. Signs of cracks in the economy's main pillar of support, ahead of the holiday season, could further stoke financial market fears of a sharper slowdown in economic growth.

The economy is being hamstrung by a 15-month trade war between the United States and China, which has soured business sentiment, leading to a decline in capital expenditure and a recession in manufacturing.

"This morning's report solidifies concerns of the consumer's inability to perpetually support the economy alone," said Lindsey Piegza, chief economist at Stifel in Chicago. "With business investment declining and manufacturing activity deteriorating, many investors brushed off fears of a slowdown because the consumer was still spending."

Retail sales dropped 0.3% last month as households cut back spending on motor vehicles, building materials, hobbies and online purchases. That was the first drop since February. Data for August was revised up to show retail sales rising 0.6% instead of 0.4% as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast retail sales would climb 0.3% in September. Compared to September last year, retail sales increased 4.1%.

Excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services, retail sales were unchanged last month after advancing by an unrevised 0.3% in August. These so-called core retail sales correspond most closely with the consumer spending component of gross domestic product.

Last month's drop and August's unrevised gain in core retail sales prompted economists to cut their third-quarter consumer spending growth estimates to around a 2.5% annualized rate from a 3.0% pace. Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the economy, increased at a 4.6% rate in the second quarter, the most in 1-1/2 years.

That, together with another report from the Commerce Department showing business inventories were unchanged in August, led economists to lower their GDP forecasts for the third quarter to a range between 1.2% pace and 1.9% rate.

Slowing growth was also underscored by a third report from the Fed describing the economy as expanding "at a slight to modest pace," based on anecdotal information on business activity collected from the U.S. central bank's contacts nationwide on or before Oct. 7.



FILE PHOTO: Shoppers walk through the King of Prussia Mall, United States' largest retail shopping space, in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, U.S., December 8, 2018. REUTERS/Mark Makela

The economy grew at a 2.0% pace in the April-June quarter, slowing from the first quarter's brisk 3.1% rate. The government will publish its snapshot of third-quarter GDP later this month.

Some economists speculated the cooling in hiring, marked by the smallest three-month average gain in private employment in seven years in September, was probably making Americans more cautious about spending.

Others believed a strike by about 48,000 General Motors (GM.N) workers was a factor. GM and the United Auto Workers union reached a tentative deal on Wednesday to end the month-long strike.

The National Retail Federation blamed trade tensions and difficulties stripping seasonal fluctuations from the data at the end of summer and the start of the new school year. Retailers also said an early Labor Day holiday could have pulled into August some purchases which normally take place in September.

The dollar .DXY fell to a four-week low against a basket of currencies, while U.S. Treasury prices rose. Stocks on Wall Street traded lower.

FILE PHOTO: Shoppers walk through the King of Prussia Mall, United States' largest retail shopping space, in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, U.S., December 8, 2018. RE

FURTHER DECELERATION EXPECTED

Though President Donald Trump announced a truce in the trade war with China last Friday, which delayed additional tariffs that were due this month, economists say the longest economic expansion on record remained in danger without all import duties being rolled back. Trump on Wednesday said he was unlikely to sign any trade deal with Beijing until he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping at next month's APEC forum in Chile.

The International Monetary Fund warned on Tuesday that the U.S.-China trade war would cut 2019 global growth to its slowest pace since the 2008-2009 financial crisis, and expressed caution over Trump's so-called Phase 1 trade deal, saying more details were needed.

Growth is also being restricted by the fading stimulus from last year's \$1.5 trillion tax cut package. "The outlook is for further deceleration in household spending," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pennsylvania. "With job growth, wage gains and hours worked easing back, the gains in income needed to sustain strong consumption are just not there."

With consumer spending slowing, a full trade deal still elusive and details of Britain's exit from the European Union unclear, many economists expect the Fed to cut interest rates at its Oct. 29-30 policy meeting to keep the expansion, now in its 11th year, on track.



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U.S. tells Chinese diplomats to give notice of meetings

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Chinese diplomats in the United States must now give advance notice of any meetings with state, local and municipal officials, as well as at educational and research institutions, senior State Department officials said on Wednesday.

The officials told reporters the move was an effort to “add reciprocity” to the way U.S. diplomats are treated in China.

It has been in the works for some time, they said, and not directly linked to any other part of the U.S.-China relationship, which has been strained by a trade war under President Donald Trump.

“This action is a response to what the PRC (Peoples Republic of China) government does to limit the interaction our diplomats can have in China with Chinese stakeholders,” a State Department official said.

American diplomats in China must not only notify the government there of meetings it plans to hold with Chinese people and officials, they must get permission first, the official said.

“What we’re trying to accomplish here is ... get closer to a reciprocal situation, hopefully with the desired end effect of having the Chinese government provide greater access to our diplomats in China,” the official said.

The onus will be on the Chinese to notify the State Department of their meetings, the officials said.

They would not discuss the consequences for any Chinese official who does not comply with the new requirement, which went into effect on Wednesday.



FILE PHOTO: Chinese and U.S. flags flutter near The Bund, before U.S. trade delegation meet their Chinese counterparts for talks in Shanghai, China July 30, 2019. REUTERS/Aly Song

Still work to do on China trade deal, Mnuchin says

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. and Chinese trade negotiators still have work to do on a “phase one” trade agreement ahead of a targeted signing by U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping next month, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Wednesday.

Mnuchin told reporters there had been no invitation from China for U.S. officials to travel to Beijing for

more talks about the agreement, but he and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer were prepared to travel if necessary.

He also said the Trump administration has made no decision on how to address planned tariffs on \$156 billion of Chinese goods due to take effect on Dec. 15.



U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin speaks about sanctions against Turkey at a news briefing at the White House in Washington, U.S., October 11, 2019. RE-

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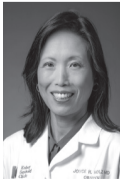
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Editor’s Choice



Members of the Circus perform during the weekly general audience at the Vatican, October 16, 2019. REUTERS/Remo Casilli TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam delivers her annual policy address



Democratic presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden shoots a selfie with the crowd at the conclusion of the fourth U.S. Democratic presidential candidates 2020 election debate in Westerville, Ohio



Police officers stand guard near a protester carrying a U.S. flag, ahead of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s annual policy address, at the Legislative Council in Hong Kong



Democratic presidential candidates Biden and Warren pose together at the start of the fourth U.S. Democratic presidential candidates 2020 election debate at Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio U.S.



Democratic presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden points during the fourth U.S. Democratic presidential candidates 2020 election debate in Westerville, Ohio



Officers carry a coffin of Alexei Leonov, the first man to conduct a space walk in 1965, during his funeral in Mytishchi, outside Moscow



A U.S. Border Patrol agent seizes a rope ladder found rigged onto a levee wall after apprehending a group of undocumented migrants who illegally crossed the Rio Grande near Penitas

A Government Toxicology Report Found Links Between High Levels Of Nonstick Compounds In People’s Blood That Caused Health Problems

FDA: Sampling Finds Toxic Nonstick Compounds In Food



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler speaks at the National Press Club in Washington, Monday, June 3, 2019. The Food and Drug Administration’s first broad testing of food for a worrisome class of nonstick, stain-resistant industrial compounds found high levels in some grocery store meats and seafood and in off-the-shelf chocolate cake. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration found substantial levels of a worrisome class of nonstick, stain-resistant industrial compounds in some grocery store meats and seafood and in off-the-shelf chocolate cake, according to FDA researchers.

The FDA’s food-test results are likely to heighten complaints by states and public health groups that President Donald Trump’s administration is not acting fast enough or firmly enough to start regulating the manmade compounds.

A federal toxicology report last year cited links between high levels of the compounds in people’s blood and health problems, but said it was not certain the nonstick compounds were the cause.

The levels in nearly half of the meat and fish tested were two or more times over the only currently existing federal advisory level for any kind of the widely used manmade com-

pounds, which are called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS.



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler speaks at the National Press Club in Washington, Monday, June 3, 2019. The Food and Drug Administration’s first broad testing of food for a worrisome class of nonstick, stain-resistant industrial compounds found high levels in some grocery store meats and seafood and in off-the-shelf chocolate cake. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

The level in the chocolate cake was higher: more than 250 times the only federal guidelines, which are for some PFAS in drinking water.

Food and Drug Administration spokeswoman Tara Rabin said Monday that the agency thought the contamination was “not likely to be a human health concern,” even though the tests exceeded the sole existing federal PFAS recommendations for drinking water.

As a handful of PFAS contaminations of food emerge around the country, authorities have deemed some a health concern but not others. The agency considers each discovery of the compound in food case by case, including the kind of food, levels of contamination, frequency of consumption and latest scientific information, Rabin said.

There are nearly 5,000 varieties of PFAS, which DuPont created in 1938 and first put into use for nonstick cookware. Industries use them in countless consumer items — food packaging, carpets and couches, dental floss and outdoor gear — to repeal grease, water and stains.

The chemicals also are found in firefighting foam, which the Defense department calls irreplaceable in suppressing jet-fuel fires. Especially around military bases and PFAS facilities, decades of use have built up levels in water, soil and some treated sewage sludge used to fertilize non-organic food crops and feed for livestock.

They’ve been a topic of congressional hearings, state legislation and intense federal and state scrutiny over the past two years.



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler responds to a question from the audience at the National Press Club in Washington, Monday, June 3, 2019. The Food and Drug Administration’s first broad testing of food for a worrisome class of nonstick, stain-resistant industrial compounds found high levels in some grocery store

meats and seafood and in off-the-shelf chocolate cake. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

Last year’s federal toxicology review concluded the compounds are more dangerous than previously thought, saying consistent studies of exposed people “suggest associations” with some kinds of cancers, liver problems, low birth weight and other issues.

The compounds have been dubbed “forever chemicals” because they take thousands of years to degrade, and because some accumulate in people’s bodies.

The Environmental Protection Agency earlier established a nonbinding health threshold of 70 parts per trillion for two-phased out forms of the contaminant in drinking water.

The EPA has said it would consider setting mandatory limits instead after the toxicology report and after federally mandated PFAS testing of water systems found contamination. The administration has called dealing with PFAS a “potential public relations nightmare” and a “national priority.”

“I know there are people who would like us to move faster” on PFAS, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said Monday at the National Press Club. “We are addressing this much faster than the agency has ever done for a chemical like this.”

Impatient for federal action, several states have moved to regulate the chemicals on their own, including setting standards for groundwater or drinking water.

The FDA study sampled market-basket items bought in three, undisclosed mid-Atlantic cities in 2017, testing for PFAS.

PFOS — already phased out of production in the U.S. as a health concern — turned up at levels ranging from 134 parts per trillion to 865 parts per trillion in tilapia, chicken, turkey, beef, cod, salmon, shrimp, lamb, catfish and hot dogs. Chocolate cake tested at 17,640 parts per trillion of a kind of PFAS called PFPeA.



FILE - This Thursday, Aug. 2, 2018, file photo shows the U.S. Food and Drug Administration building behind FDA logos at a bus stop on the agency’s campus in Silver Spring, Md. The Food and Drug Administration’s first broad testing of food for a worrisome class of nonstick, stain-resistant industrial compounds found high levels in some grocery store meats and seafood and in off-the-shelf chocolate cake, according to unreleased findings FDA researchers presented at a scientific conference in Europe. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File)

The FDA presentation also disclosed PFAS findings — one spiking over 1,000 parts per trillion — in leafy green vegetables grown within 10 miles (16 kilometers) of an unspecified eastern U.S. PFAS plant and sold at a farmer’s market.

And it previewed test levels for a previously reported instance of PFAS contamination of the food supply in the feed and milk at a dairy near an Air Force base in New Mexico. The FDA called the milk contamination a health concern.

FDA researchers discussed the results at a conference by the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry last week in Finland. The Environmental Defense Fund and the Environmental Working Group obtained the FDA presentation and provided it to The Associated Press.

“What this calls for is additional research to determine how widespread this contamination is and how high the levels are,” said Linda Birnbaum, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, in an interview. “We have to look at total human exposure — not just what’s in the water or what’s in the food ... or not just dust. We need to look at the sum totals of what the exposures are.”

“Drinking one glass of contaminated water is unlikely to be associated with health risks, as is eating one slice of contaminated chocolate cake,” said Jamie DeWitt, a toxicologist at East Carolina University who studies PFAS. “Individually, each item is unlikely to be a huge problem, but collectively and over a lifetime, that may be a different story.” (Courtesy apnews.com)



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Uber Elevate, An Aerial Ride-Sharing Service, Will Launch In The Dallas-Fort Worth Market

SPECIAL REPORT

Uber’s One-Stop Plan For Transportation Control




Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

In 10 short years, Uber’s ride-hailing service has become so well-known that people use “uber” now as a verb. For its next act, Uber wants to manage everything about how you get around, whether on the roads or sidewalks, underground or in the air. Like Amazon, which started selling books online and now delivers almost everything right to your door, Uber aims to leverage its digital expertise from ride-hailing to become a one-stop shop for transportation. •Here’s how CEO Dara Khosrowshahi described the grand vision last week at the Uber Elevate Summit: “We don’t just want to be the Amazon of transportation, but also the Google of transportation.” In Uber’s multi-modal view of the future, you’d use the Uber app to punch in your destination — JFK Airport, for example — and you’d be offered multiple options for your journey, each with an estimated time of arrival and different price point. •You could get an inexpensive Uber Pool or

Uber X, the app might say — but with current traffic, expect it to take up to 2 hours. •Or you could hail an Uber car to a downtown skyport and then board an air taxi that will zip you over the congested freeway to JFK, saving time but doubling your fare. •You’d select the option that suits your schedule or budget, and it would all be stitched together into a one-click transaction. Starting with scooters and e-bikes, the pieces of that personal mobility vision are beginning to come together. •Next month, Uber will launch piloted helicopter service between lower Manhattan



and JFK for around \$200, about the cost of a premium Uber Black car ride. •It’s a precursor to Uber Air, the name for its planned flying taxi network that is set to start trials next year in Dallas, Los Angeles, and Melbourne, Australia. Commercial passenger service is targeted for 2023. •Last week, Uber and Volvo introduced their latest autonomous vehicle prototype, which could one day drive itself — at least on simple routes. •In Boston and Denver, Uber has integrated real-time public transit information into its app, with the goal of allowing people to purchase bus or train tickets through Uber. **Business transportation is another growth opportunity**, like restaurants that deliver meals using Uber Eats, or health care agencies that hire Uber Health to provide rides for patients so they don’t miss their appointments. •Uber Freight aims to make logistics more efficient by matching shippers with carriers the way it pairs ride-hailing customers with drivers. **Uber’s expertise in matching supply and demand**, and the cloud-based digital platform it built for ride-hailing, make it easier to build out that broader transportation ecosystem. •“We want to be your everyday use case when you wake up and you go to work, or you go out to eat or you go see a friend, we want to be there,” says Khosrowshahi. **The bottom line:** There’s definitely an advantage to having one transportation app, with one-click payment, anywhere in the world — as long as you don’t mind Uber following you around. (Courtesy axios.com) **Related**
Uber Wants To Look To The ‘Cities Of

‘The Future’
It aims for transporting people through the sky
When Uber envisions the future, it not only wants to put urban air taxis and drones in the skies. It also wants to transform how people navigate cities and how they live in them. “We want not just to be the Amazon of transportation but also the Google of transportation,” Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said, 
Uber advanced its pitch for urban air taxis during a two-day conference in Washington, D.C. — the Uber Elevate Summit 2019 — at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center earlier this month. (Photo/ Getty Images for Uber Elevate/TNS)
One of the first places Uber wants that to play out is Dallas-Fort Worth. It’s one of the first three markets for Uber Elevate, an initiative to launch the aerial ride-sharing service. Uber took that message — and its pitch for urban air taxis — to a new, and potentially tougher, audience last week. It held a two-day conference about the ambitious effort in Washington, D.C., the home turf of the regulatory agencies and lawmakers that it must win over. About 1,500 policymakers, tech executives and aviation officials attended the conference. It featured lawmakers and federal officials, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao and Federal Aviation Administration officials. Uber gave a progress report and made splashy announcements at its third annual Uber Elevate Summit. It announced the first international market for the air service — Melbourne, Australia. It revealed that Uber Eats is working with McDonald’s to deliver Big Macs and fries by drone.

It touted the progress of six aviation companies that are designing the aircraft. **Artist’s rendering of an Uber “flying taxi.”**
And it dived into specifics, such as economics, safety and FAA-required certification. It showed off its different modes of transportation, from its new self-driving Volvo SUV to electric scooters. Through splashy presentations and showroom floor exhibits, Uber and its business partners tried to build the case that urban air taxi service is not a far-fetched idea but one that’s coming to fruition. Uber went public in May. The tech giant’s growth has been fueled by venture capital, but it is spending billions of dollars and has yet to turn a profit. That hasn’t slowed development of its aerial ride-sharing service. It expects to start flight demonstrations next year and launch commercial service in a few cities in 2023. It wants the urban air taxis eventually to become autonomous. Mark Moore, Uber’s director of engineering for vehicle systems, said he’s already seen some of the aircraft take flight. He declined to name the companies that are flight testing, saying they’re keeping quiet for competitive reasons. “It’s incredibly impressive,” he said. “They’re nothing like helicopters.” (Courtesy dallas morning news via http://thegazette.com)

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