

BUSINESS



Traders William Lawrence, (center), Timothy Nick, center, and specialist Philip Finale work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, July 18. US stocks moved lower in early trading on Wall Street Thursday after Netflix reported a slump in new subscribers and dragged down communications companies. (AP)

Garuda scraps inflight photo ban amid online uproar

Indonesian flag carrier Garuda withdrew a proposal to stop passengers taking photos in cabins on Wednesday after being mocked on "anti-Japan emotion" and was committed to diplomatically resolving the problem, Ko said.

On Tuesday, a directive from the airline instructing cabin crew to stop passengers taking photos and videos mid-air was leaked on social media. The issue has inflamed passions in a country that is one of Instagram's biggest markets worldwide and where posting travel "selfies" is hugely popular.

The privacy of other passengers and flight crew on duty when taking photos. "This appeal is also based on reports, suggestions and input from customers/passengers who feel uncomfortable and disturbed by the shooting and documentation of activities without prior permission."

Unjust economic retaliation S. Korean political parties back Moon in Japan feud

SEOUL, South Korea, July 18, (AP): Setting aside their usual bickering, South Korean liberal and conservative parties on Thursday vowed to cooperate to help the Seoul government prevail in an escalating trade row with Japan. After a meeting between the parties' leaders and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at Seoul's presidential office, they announced plans to create a "pan-national" emergency body to respond to tighter Japanese trade controls on certain technology exports to South Korea.

such moves would have to be set up by progress in working-level negotiations to be successful, Blue House spokeswoman Ko Min-jung said. Moon also said wasn't acting on "anti-Japan emotion" and was committed to diplomatically resolving the problem, Ko said.

Exports

The dispute erupted earlier this month when Tokyo tightened controls on the exports of photoresists and two other chemicals to South Korean companies that use them to produce semiconductors and display screens for smartphones and TVs. Seoul has accused Tokyo of weaponizing trade to retaliate against South Korea court rulings calling for Japanese companies to compensate aging South Korean plaintiffs for forced labor during World War II, and plans to file a complaint with the World Trade Organization.

Tokyo said the issue has nothing to do with historical issues between the countries and says the materials affected by the export controls can be sent only to trustworthy trading partners. Without presenting specific examples, it has questioned Seoul's credibility in controlling the exports of arms and items that can be used both for civilian and military purposes.

South Korea has rejected the Japanese claims and proposed an inquiry by the United Nations Security Council or another international body on the export controls of both countries.

South Korea is also bracing for the possibility that Japan will take further steps by removing it from a 27-country "whitelist" receiving preferential treatment in trade.

Its removal from the list would require Japanese companies to apply for case-by-case approvals for exports to South Korea of hundreds of items deemed sensitive, not just the three materials affected by the trade curbs that took effect July 4.

Earlier in the day, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan lost 0.3%, with Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei tumbling 2%, its biggest one-day fall in four months.

In currencies, the dollar slipped for a second day against its rivals on the back of softer US Treasury yields, with investors focusing their attention on the Fed's meeting next week.

Against a basket of its rivals, the dollar edged 0.1% lower to 97.195. Sterling was a shade higher at \$1.275, off its lowest since April 2017 touched on Wednesday amid growing risks of Britain leaving the European Union in a no-deal Brexit.

Stocks retreat as US-China trade war drags on corporate earnings

Euro dips on report on ECB inflation goal, dollar flat

LONDON, July 18, (RTRS): Global shares slipped on Thursday on growing signs that a trade dispute between the United States and China was taking a toll on corporate earnings, with nerves spreading from Wall Street through Asia to European markets.

MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, fell 0.2% to its lowest in nine days, after the start of the earnings season brought bad signs. Rail freight giant CSX Corp, cut its revenue forecast as it warned of the impact of the US-China trade war, pushing down Wall Street indexes on Wednesday.

In Europe, too, earnings were top of the agenda. Tech stocks led the slide as software firm SAP, Europe's most valuable tech stock by market cap, slumped 10% on poor results, flagging the impact of the US-China trade war. The Euro STOXX 600 fell 0.5% to its lowest in almost three weeks, later erasing its losses as traders cited a Bloomberg News report that the European Central Bank staff are studying a potential revamp of the bank's near 2% inflation goal.

Investors also cited a report that progress toward a US-China trade deal has stalled as the Trump administration works out how to address Beijing's demands that it ease restrictions on Huawei Technologies. Wall Street futures gauges were slightly down.

Adding to the concerns over corporate health, Netflix shed US subscribers for the first time in 8 years, sending shares falling over 10% after the close of the market. Compounding the trade concerns were worrying signs for the economy emerging from Japan to the United States.

The earnings anxiety and macro data boosted demand for safe haven assets, with yields on benchmark 10-year and 30-year US Treasuries climbing overnight. Eurozone government bond yields fell following the report on the ECB, which also pushed the single currency down 0.1% to the day's lows of \$1.1205.

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Major British banks, such as HSBC, are already talking of the possibility of the pound breaching post-Brexit referendum lows of \$1.149, with some asking whether the pound is headed for parity against both the dollar and the euro.

On the commodities front, oil rose 1% after Iran said it had seized a foreign oil tanker in the Gulf. Brent crude futures were up 58 cents at \$64.24 a barrel by 1100 GMT. They fell 1.1% on Wednesday.

US

Wall Street's main indexes edged lower on Thursday as investors digested a slew of mixed earnings, while Netflix reported a surprise fall in US subscribers in a downturn start to results from high-growth companies.

Shares of the streaming pioneer sank 11.4% to their lowest since late-January at \$321.10, as the company also missed targets for new subscribers overseas at a time when it has staked its future on global expansion.

Losses in Netflix also dragged the communication services sector, one of the best-performing S&P sectors so far this year, 1.28% lower.

As second-quarter earnings rolled in this week, the three main Wall Street indexes retreated slightly from record highs and are set for their steepest weekly fall in seven weeks. At 11:13 a.m. ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 58.66 points, or 0.22%, at 27,161.19, the S&P 500 was down 2.14 points, or 0.07%, at 2,982.28. The Nasdaq Composite was down 25.62 points, or 0.31%, at 8,159.59.

Among positive earnings reports, tobacco company Philip Morris climbed 7.3% after raising its full-year profit outlook, while railroad operator Union Pacific Corp jumped 4.8% after reporting a profit beat.

International Business Machines Corp rose 3.9% as its quarterly profit beat on strong growth in its high-margin cloud business. Gains in IBM, along with those in Apple Inc, kept the technology sector afloat.

Morgan Stanley rose 0.4% after posting a better-than-expected quarterly profit and wrapped up earnings from big US banks. The bank subsector was up 0.8% after three days of losses.

UK

Britain's FTSE 100 followed other major stock markets lower on Thursday as initial batches of corporate earnings jangled nerves over global growth, while losses for London's mid-cap index were capped by a buyout of pub operator Ei Group.

All but two of the blue-chip index's sectors ended in the red as it shed 0.5% - its biggest intraday fall in nearly two weeks, while the mid-cap FTSE 250 lost 0.4%.

Among major drags on the main index were oil heavyweights Shell and BP, which tracked a slump in crude prices amid expectation that output would rise in the Gulf of Mexico following last week's hurricane, as well as miners.

Bright spots on the index were tobacco giants British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands after US peer Philip Morris reported its sixth consecutive quarter of profit beat. BAT surged 6.1% on its best day in over a decade while Imperial Brands added 2.2%.

Slug and Lettuce owner Stonegate Pub Company agreed to buy Ei Group for 285 pence a share, a 38% premium to Wednesday's close, which sent the mid-cap pub chain's stock to its highest in more than a decade.

Europe

European stocks ended lower on Thursday, as earnings worries ran high after poor results from software firm SAP sank technology shares, although hopes of looser monetary policy from the European Central Bank helped indexes bounce off early lows.

After falling as much as 0.7% during the session, the pan-European STOXX 600 index closed down 0.2%, drawing support from a Bloomberg report that ECB staff were studying a potential change to the bank's inflation goal of near 2%.

Shares in Europe's most valuable tech company fell 5.6% after it said investors would have to wait till next year for a major improvement in margins as the business software group reported a 21% fall in quarterly operating profit. That drove Germany's DAX to a one-month low, while technology stocks dropped 1.5%.

Another big decliner was Finland's Wartsila Oyj, which slumped 12% after the engineering firm warned that it expected demand to weaken for its marine and energy businesses.

Also limiting losses in Europe's blue-chip index was Swiss drugmaker Novartis, up 3% after the company lifted full-year sales and profit targets.

Asia

Asian stock markets followed Wall Street lower Thursday after President Donald Trump reignited trade fears by saying he could impose more tariffs on Chinese imports. Benchmarks in Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney all declined.

Trump alarmed investors by saying he had \$325 billion of Chinese imports available for additional tariffs "if we want." That shook markets that had been reassured by Trump's agreement with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June to hold off on new trade penalties while they resume negotiations.

The Chinese government warned tariff hikes would "create a new obstacle" in talks on ending their bruising fight over Beijing's technology ambitions. Trump's comment "cast a dark cloud over lingering concerns on trade talk progress," Mizuho bank analysts said in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.7% to 2,908.87 and Tokyo's Nikkei 225 tumbled 2.14% to 21,010.48. Hong Kong's Hang Seng retreated 0.6% to 28,414 and Seoul's KOSPI was 0.38% lower at 2,064.94. Indian Senxex lost 0.2% to 39126.40.

Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 shed 0.5% to 6,639.30 and Taiwan and Southeast Asian markets also retreated. New Zealand gained.

Oil

Oil fell more than 1.5% a barrel on Thursday, weighed down by weakness in US equities markets and an expectation that crude output would rise in the Gulf of Mexico following last week's hurricane in the region.

Crude rose earlier in the session after Iran said it had seized a foreign tanker in the Gulf. Prices pulled back after it emerged that the vessel had only a small cargo and was detained on Sunday for fuel smuggling.

Prices were further weighed down after the US equities market opened lower. The S&P 500 opened lower by 5.55 points, or 0.2%, at 2,978.87.

Brent crude futures were down 93 cents at \$62.73 a barrel by 10:34 a.m. EDT (1534 GMT), after earlier touching a session high of \$64.46.

West Texas Intermediate crude futures were down \$1.01 a barrel at \$55.77, after earlier rising to as much as \$57.32 a barrel.

The retreat from early session highs accelerated after each benchmark fell below yesterday's low, which had provided technical support, Yawger said.

Oil had fallen on Wednesday in response to a sharp rise in US stockpiles of products such as gasoline that pointed to weak demand during the US driving season.

Currencies

The euro dipped on Thursday following a report the European Central Bank staff is studying a potential change to its inflation goal, while the dollar was little changed amid the Fed's decision to keep rates steady. Sterling rose for a second day, rebounding from a 27-month low against the greenback, on surprisingly strong UK domestic retail sales last month and developments that would make it harder for the next prime minister to force a no-deal Brexit. Trading among major currencies was mostly muted as market players wait to see whether the Fed would lower US rates for the first time in a decade and if it would signal more rate cuts down the road. At 11:20 a.m. (1520 GMT), an index that tracks the dollar against a basket of currencies was down 0.07% at 97.152. The dollar did not budge after US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told Bloomberg earlier Thursday there has been "no change to the dollar policy."

He later told Reuters that there was no change to the use of a \$94.6 billion federal fund intended to stabilize currencies during times of market turmoil. The euro hit a session low of \$1.1205 before moving to \$1.1228, which was nearly unchanged on the day. The dollar fell to a two-week low at 107.620 yen. Sterling strengthened against the greenback after data showed UK retail sales unexpectedly grew 1.0% in June, stoking hopes the economy would avert a downturn in the second quarter. The pound was up 0.47% at \$1.2489 after hitting a 27-month low of \$1.2382 the previous day. The euro was 0.42% lower at 89.9 pence, below a six-month high of 90.15 pence struck on Wednesday.

exchange rates - July 18

Table containing exchange rates and travellers cheques for various currencies including US dollar, Sterling pound, Euro, Japanese yen, Swiss franc, Canadian dollar, Swedish krona, Saudi riyal, UAE dirham, Bahraini dinar, Omani riyal, Danish krone, Indian rupee, Pakistani rupee, Sri Lanka rupee, Bangladesh taka, Philippine peso, Australian dollar, Hong Kong dollar, Singapore dollar, Jordanian dinar, Egyptian pound, Cyprus pound, Yemeni riyal, Thai baht, South African rand, Korean won, Syrian pound, Iranian Riyal, Lebanese pound, Malaysian ringgit, Indonesian rupiah, New Zealand dollar, local gold, and travellers cheques.