

# US equities sink on new COVID variant



Trader Dennis Maguire works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Friday, Nov. 26, 2021. (AP)

## Dow loses 905 points

**NEW YORK, Nov 27, (AP):** Stocks sank Friday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average briefly falling more than 1,000 points, as a new coronavirus variant first detected in South Africa appeared to be spreading across the globe. Investors were uncertain whether the variant could potentially reverse months of progress at getting the COVID-19 pandemic under control.

The S&P 500 index dropped 106.84 points, or 2.3%, to close at 4,594.62. It was the worst day for Wall Street's benchmark index since February.

The index was dragged lower by everything from banks, travel companies and energy companies as investors tried to reposition to protect themselves financially from the new variant. The World Health Organization called the variant "highly transmissible."

The price of oil fell about 13%, the biggest decline since early in the pandemic, amid worries of another slowdown in the global economy. That in turn dragged down energy stocks. Exxon shares fell 3.5% while Chevron fell 2.3%.

The blue chips closed down 905.04 points to end the day at 34,899.34. The Nasdaq Composite lost 353.57 points, or 2.2%, to 15,491.66.

"Investors are likely to shoot first and ask questions later until more is known," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a report. That was evident from the action in the bond market, where the yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 1.48% from 1.64% on Wednesday. As a result, banks took some of the heaviest losses. JPMorgan Chase dropped 3%.

There have been other variants of the coronavirus - the delta variant devastated much of the U.S. throughout the summer - and investors, public officials and the general public are jittery about any new variant that's spreading. It's been nearly two years since COVID-19 emerged, killing more than 5 million people around the globe so far.

Cases of the new variant were found in Hong Kong, Belgium and Tel Aviv as well as major South African cities like Johannesburg.

### Impacts

The economic impacts of this variant were already being felt. The European Union and the U.K. both announced travel restrictions from southern Africa on Friday. After the market closed, the U.S. also put travel restrictions on those coming from South Africa as well as seven other African nations.

Airline stocks quickly sold off, with United Airlines dropping 9.6% and American Airlines falling 8.8%.

"COVID had seemingly been put in the rear-view mirror by financial markets until recently," Douglas Porter, chief economist at BMO Capital Markets. "At the least, (the virus) is likely to continue throwing sand in the gears of the global economy in 2022, restraining the recovery (and) keeping kinks in the supply chain."

Even Bitcoin got caught up in the selling. The digital currency dropped 8.4% to \$54,179, according to CoinDesk.

One sign of Wall Street's anxiety was the VIX, the market's measurement of volatility that is sometimes referred to as its "fear gauge." The VIX jumped 53.6% to a reading of 28.54, its highest reading since January before the vaccines began to be widely distributed.

Fearful of more lockdowns and travel bans, investors moved money into companies that largely benefited from previous waves, like Zoom Communications for meetings or Peloton for at-home exercise equipment. Shares in both companies rose nearly 6%.

The coronavirus vaccine manufacturers were among the biggest beneficiaries of the emergence of this new variant and the subsequent investor reaction. Pfizer shares rose more than 6% while Moderna shares jumped more than 20%.

Merck shares fell 3.8%, however. While U.S. health officials said Merck's experimental treatment of COVID-19 was effective, data showed the pill was not as effective at keeping patients out of the hospital as originally thought.

Investors are worried that the supply chain issues that have impacted global markets for months will worsen. Ports and freight yards are vulnerable and could be shut by new, localized outbreaks.

### Stretched

"Supply chains are already stretched," said Neil Shearing, an economist with Capital Economics in London. "A new, more dangerous, virus wave could cause some workers to temporarily exit the workforce, and deter others from returning, making current labor shortages worse."

The variant also puts more pressure on central banks that are already faced with a dilemma: whether and when to raise interest rates to combat rising inflation. "The threat of a new, more serious, variant of the virus may be a reason for central banks to postpone plans to raise interest rates until the picture becomes clearer," Shearing said.

Stock trading the Friday after Thanksgiving is typically the slowest day of the year, with the market closing at 1 p.m. Eastern. However volume on Friday was much higher than it would typically be for a holiday-shortened day. Roughly 3.4 billion shares exchanged hands on the New York Stock Exchange, which is only modestly below the 4 billion shares traded on an average day.

London's benchmark fell by an unusually wide margin of 3.3% at the opening and Tokyo lost 2.5%. Shanghai, Frankfurt and Hong Kong also declined. Wall Street futures fell.

Some European countries already tightened anti-virus controls this week after their own case numbers spiked. Austria imposed a 10-day lockdown, while Italy restricted activity by unvaccinated people. Americans were advised by their government to avoid Germany and Denmark.

The 27-nation EU proposed the travel suspension to member governments after South Africa said the variant was spreading in its most populous province. Britain banned flights from South Africa and five nearby countries.

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In early trading, the FTSE in London fell to 7,067.17 and the DAX in Frankfurt lost 3.3% to 15,391.00. The CAC in Paris plunged 4% to 6,789.13.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.6% to 3,564.09 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo declined to 28,751.62. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong tumbled 2.7% to 24,080.52. The Kospi in Seoul lost 1.5% to 2,936.44 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 fell 1.7% to 7,279.30.

India's Sensex retreated 2.2% to 57,499.50. New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets also declined.

## US OKs Idaho gold mine exploratory drilling

**BOISE, Idaho, Nov 27, (AP):** A Canadian mining company hoping to build a gold mine in Idaho west of Yellowstone National Park can resume exploratory drilling, the US Forest Service said Friday.

The agency said it had approved Excellon Idaho Gold's Kilgore Gold Exploration Project in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest in Clark County. Excellon Idaho is a subsidiary of Toronto, Ontario-based Excellon Resources Inc.

The project had been halted following federal court rulings in 2019 and 2020 concerning potential harm to Yellowstone cutthroat trout in a stream. The new drilling plan pulls water from a different stream officials say doesn't contain Yellowstone cut-

throat trout.

The company says the area contains at least 825,000 ounces (23.4 million grams) of gold near the surface, and potentially more deeper. The company said it is looking at possibly building an open-pit mine if exploration finds that the gold is mostly near the surface, or an underground mine if the gold is deeper.

Those types of mines would require additional approval from the Forest Service.

"As an Idaho native, I know how important it is to protect the animals, lands and waters we all cherish," Phil Bandy, Excellon's Senior Project Manager, said in a statement. "I am committed to collaborating with my fellow Idahoans to sustain a balance

of economic development and natural resources stewardship."

The Forest Service initially approved the exploration in 2018. But the Idaho Conservation League and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition filed a lawsuit in November 2018 contending the exploratory drilling could pollute groundwater and surface water.

The groups also said the drilling would harm grizzly bears, whitebark pine, Yellowstone cutthroat trout and Columbia spotted frogs.

The federal court ruled the Forest Service didn't violate environmental laws in determining the exploratory drilling wouldn't overly harm grizzly bears, whitebark pine or Columbia spotted frogs.

However, the court found the Forest

Service hadn't done an adequate analysis involving groundwater quality in the Dog Bone Ridge drainage, home to Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The trout are considered a sensitive species facing threats to population or habitat.

The new plan approved by the Forest Service says water for drilling at Dog Bone Ridge will now come from Beaver Creek rather than Corral Creek. The agency also said Excellon has added several monitoring sites associated with Dog Bone Ridge.

The company's plan approved in 2018 included 10 miles (16 kilometers) of new roads and 140 drill stations.

The Forest Service in its approval on Friday said 10 drill sites had been built before the lawsuit halted the project, so the latest approval is for 130 drill sites.

## Mitigation of Carbon Emissions as part of Sustainability Framework KFH Supports the First Carbon Offset Platform in Kuwait

*Kuwait Finance House "KFH" signed a strategic partnership with Sidra Initiative and Green Dream Team under the umbrella of (KFH is Green) campaign. This activity comes as part of its efforts to protect environment and achieve the plantation and greening of Kuwait as part of its social responsibility.*



This strategic partnership aims to spread awareness on the significance of reserving environment and plantation.

The partnership comprises several environment projects and activities in the field of tree plantation and the elimination of carbon emissions.

The partnership aims to unify efforts to increase greenery in Kuwait and encourage environment friend initiatives. Also, through this kind of initiatives, KFH can support UN Sustainable Development Goals which are compatible with Kuwait's 2035 vision.

KFH Assistant Manager – Public Relations, Fahad Al Saad said: "This agreement represents an integral part of KFH strategy which aims to continue efforts to achieve a sustainable impact for its social initiatives and contributions, thus reflecting the bank's interest in various issues namely the environment issue. Through

**Al Saad:**  
KFH continues its sustainable social contributions and initiatives

these initiatives, we expect KFH to be the main supporter to preserve Kuwait environment and enhance environmental culture among society members and to encourage them to protect environment.

From his side, Shabeeb Alajmi, Green Dream Team Leader said that "A strategic partnership has been signed with KFH to support biological diversification in the State of Kuwait and increase plantation of wild trees in natural reserves. We thank KFH for this initiative and wish you all prosperity and success"

**KFH Participates in Planting 500 Trees in Abdali Reserve in The Initial Stage**

The founder of Sidra Initiative, Khaled Alwaqqyan expressed his pleasure in signing the strategic partnership with KFH. He said "Through this partnership we shall establish the first Carbon Offset Platform in Kuwait. We shall initially mitigate carbon emissions by increasing trees plantation and other future environmental projects will follow later"

The Carbon Offset Platform designed by "Sidra" is considered as a center to facilitate the plantation of trees by giving all individuals and institutions an equal opportunity to participate in this project.

To crown this strategic partnership among KFH, Sidra and Green Dream, KFH is participating in the initial stage of this project by planting 500 trees including 3 years maintenance, which is the average nursing period required for the tree to be self-sufficient.

KFH plans to exert more efforts in the coming stages to plant more trees and organize similar initiatives. To this end, KFH has encouraged all its employees in addition to the voluntary team to participate in the tree plantation campaign in Abdali reserve as determined by the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fishery Affairs.

It is worth mentioning that KFH has participated recently with the Public Authority for Agriculture in supporting the tree plantation and greening campaign for the agricultural season 2021/ 2022. The partnership is considered as part of the tree plantation and greening campaign of Kuwait areas. Also, KFH has participated with the authority, in the opening day, in the plantation of Sider trees and participated in other events within the same campaign.

## Waleed Al Khashti: investing in Kuwait's future generations is our top priority

### Zain shares ambitions of youth at NUKS conference in United States

*Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, took part in the opening ceremony of the 37th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA). The company is the Platinum sponsor of the event, which is held in Chicago, Illinois under the patronage of H.H. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah.*

The opening ceremony witnessed the presence of many national figures, including H.E. the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United States of America Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti.

During his opening speech, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti said: "Every time we fly to the US and meet our youth, we are overwhelmed with feelings of pride in a generation filled with ambition, eagerness, and dedication to achieve so much for our nation".

Al Khashti added: "We did not allow the pandemic to be an obstacle that prevents us from taking part in this year's conference. We have always been a main partner of this event throughout the years because it is a national gathering through which we meet our students abroad, who represent our hope for the future".

Al Khashti continued: "I would like to take this opportunity to express my pride in Kuwait's students abroad, and further renew our support to your programs here in the US. At Zain, we strongly believe in the capabilities of our youth, and we dedicate a major part of our efforts towards youth and education initiatives as part of



Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah with Al Khashti and Zain's team at the company's booth

our sustainability and social responsibility strategy".

Al Khashti concluded: "Investing in the next generation is the most profitable form of investment and is a top priority for us. That's why at Zain we focus much of our sustainability and social responsibility efforts on issues that cater to the youth. Kuwaiti is full of ambitious minds like yourselves that aspire for change, and we feel it is crucial that companies and organizations embrace these young minds to help and empower them to believe in themselves and achieve positive change".

Zain is proud to be the Platinum Sponsor of the conference, which makes a return after a halt of nearly two years due to the COVID pandemic. This year, Zain continues its role as a main supporter of the event for 17 years. The conference is considered the largest gathering of Kuwaiti students abroad, and Zain's support comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the youth and education sectors. The company is proud to have become an integral part of this event's success, through which



Al Khashti addressing Kuwait's students in Chicago

it connects with the country's youth abroad.

Zain will be contributing to the event by organizing a number of unique activities and programs for the students. The company will sponsor a special sports seminar featuring many distinguished current and past Kuwaiti athletes, as well as sponsor a health seminar that will host Ministry of Health Spokesperson Dr. Abdullah Al Sanad, who will share a behind-the-scenes look at the ministry's efforts to curb the COVID outbreak last year.

Zain will take part in a special exhibition for sponsors,

where the company will present available career opportunities to students, as well as showcase its leading experience in the telecom sector. In addition, Zain has prepared a number of surprises for students who will be visiting the event. The company is also set to host ZAINPHONIC, a special workshop that shares tips and tricks of smartphone photography, giving the students a chance to learn the best techniques for taking pro-level photos with their smartphones and helping them unleash their creativity.

Zain's presence in the event conveys its enthusiasm to interact with the future generations of Kuwaiti youth, especially those who pursue their education abroad, as the NUKS USA conference is considered the largest gathering of Kuwaitis outside of Kuwait, and welcomes students from all over the US. The event appeals to students on both intellectual and social levels and it serves as an open forum for them to exchange opinions and views regarding important domestic issues with the presence of distinguished national figures from the Kuwaiti community, including academics, media

personalities, athletes, doctors, and more who fly to the US for the purpose of meeting with the students and sharing their experiences with them.

Zain sees its annual participation in the conference as part of its responsibility as a leading national company to help provide bright and enthusiastic young Kuwaitis with a great social experience, as well as listen to their ideas and experiences while pursuing their education abroad.

The National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA) serves nearly 14,000 Kuwaiti students studying in the United States. The union aims, through its events and programs, to connect Kuwaiti students with each other on one level, and with their nation and the latest updates of the Kuwaiti community on another. NUKS USA was publicized in the USA and was granted the recognition of the United States government. The achievement is considered a proud milestone for Kuwait's youth, and is a direct result of the great relations between the State of Kuwait and United States. Such a recognition is a clear reflection of the strategic relations between the two nations.