

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp *****

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2024 ~ VOL. CCLXXXIV NO. 128

WSJ.com

★★★★ \$5.00

DIJA Closed (44722.06)

NASDAQ Closed (19060.48)

STOXX 600 507.30 ▲ 0.5%

10-YR. TREAS. Closed (4.244%)

OIL Closed (\$68.72)

GOLD Closed (\$2,639.90)

EURO \$1.0555

YEN 151.55

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **Markets appear to be taking** tariff threats in stride, with some traders drawing lessons from Trump's first term, when his comments often caused big price swings that were later unwound by actions that mitigated threats to corporate profits or the economy. **A1**

◆ **Kohl's departing chief** executive acknowledged mistakes made in the retailer's approach to inventory and display that led to a steep drop in its quarterly sales. **B1**

◆ **European stocks** broadly rose, while indexes in the Asia-Pacific region were mixed on Thursday. U.S. markets were closed for the Thanksgiving Day holiday. **B9**

◆ **Shopify, after growing up** helping small businesses set up online shops, is courting bigger clients to prolong its blockbuster growth. **B2**

◆ **The EU's competition** regulator formally closed probes into Amazon, Starbucks and Fiat's European tax cases, ending three of its attempts to crack down on international companies' tax deals after court defeats. **B3**

◆ **Canada's antitrust** watchdog alleged that Google acted unlawfully in building market share in the online-advertising business. **B9**

◆ **Volkswagen sold** an automobile plant in China's Xinjiang region that has drawn scrutiny because of Beijing's alleged persecution of Uyghur minorities there. **B3**

◆ **SoftBank is doubling down** on its investment in OpenAI, taking a bigger bet on the potential of artificial intelligence as the technology improves and gains momentum. **B4**

World-Wide

◆ **American oil executives** and bond investors are urging Trump to abandon his first-term policy of putting pressure on Venezuelan strongman Nicolás Maduro and instead allow Caracas to export more oil in return for accepting U.S. deportation flights. **A1**

◆ **Several of Trump's** picks for top government posts said they were targeted with bomb threats or false emergency reports that brought police to their homes, raising new concerns about political violence. **A4**

◆ **Elon Musk's influence** over federal spending will flow through a White House budget office that helps to develop regulations that affect his business empire. **A4**

◆ **Rebels in Syria** launched a large-scale attack on Assad government forces, storming a military base and seizing control of swaths of territory in the northwest of the country. **A6**

◆ **Investigators suspect** that the crew of a Chinese cargo ship deliberately severed two critical data cables last week as the bulk carrier's anchor was dragged along the Baltic seabed for more than 100 miles. **A8**

◆ **China released three** Americans who had been imprisoned there for years, part of a series of deals the U.S. has reached to bring home citizens from unfriendly countries. **A8**

◆ **Australia was set to** become the first country to ban social-media use by under-16s after the country's Senate overwhelmingly voted in favor of strict new legislation. **A8**

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With Mouse Eye View, It Can't Rain on Their Parade



DAVID DIEZ DEL GADDO/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

HI, MICKEY: People watched from a Manhattan balcony as balloons floated by during the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on Thursday. Down below, crowds lined the 2½-mile route despite the wet weather to watch the procession.

After Late Start, Musk Rushes To Beat Out AI Competitors

Elon Musk spent the past year building his artificial-intelligence startup xAI at breakneck speed. Now he has to turn it into a real business.

Musk started xAI in the summer of 2023 in an effort to

By Meghan Bobrowsky, Berber Jin and Tom Dotan

play catch-up with OpenAI, the ChatGPT developer he co-founded and left in 2018 after a power struggle. He poached talent from across the industry. He pushed contractors to build a massive new data center in a matter of months, a

nearly unheard of time frame for a project of that size. Now he is promising the facility in Memphis, Tenn., will help xAI deliver the world's most powerful AI "by every metric" by December.

Investors have bought into Musk's vision, or at least his record of success. The startup has raised at least \$11 billion and increased its valuation to \$50 billion in a new funding round this month, making it the second-most-valuable private AI developer behind OpenAI.

As a moneymaking venture, though, xAI barely registers. The startup told investors its revenue is on pace to surpass

\$100 million annually. OpenAI expects to bring in nearly \$4 billion of revenue this year.

Most of xAI's revenue has come from Musk's own web of companies. xAI's main product—its Grok chatbot—is available only to subscribers of his social network X. The startup is powering customer support features for SpaceX's Starlink internet service, people with knowledge of the matter said. It is also expected to help create new AI features for X's search engine, one of the people said.

The startup has discussed a deal with Tesla whereby xAI would get some Tesla revenue

in exchange for providing the carmaker with access to its technology and resources.

Now xAI is trying to stand on its own. This month, it released a paid tool developers can use to build products using Grok, offering discounts as an incentive. As soon as next month, it plans to launch a stand-alone consumer app, like ChatGPT, people familiar with the matter said.

xAI is getting a late start in a highly competitive market. OpenAI, Alphabet's Google, Please turn to page A4

◆ **SoftBank to add \$1.5 billion to OpenAI investment.... B4**

Markets Take New Tariff Prospects In Stride

Investors learned lessons from past trading on Trump social-media posts

By SAM GOLDFARB

Wall Street isn't thrilled about the return of Donald Trump's tariff threats, but traders are hardly panicking.

Shares of automakers were hit hard this week after the president-elect promised to levy hefty tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico on his first day in office, along with additional tariffs on Chinese goods. Canadian railroad companies slumped, while Mexican and Canadian currencies weakened against the dollar. The peso recovered on Thursday.

Even so, broad indexes of stocks pushed higher on Tuesday after Trump's comment, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average climbing to another record that day.

Some investors said they had learned lessons from the craze for trading on Trump's social-media posts that followed his first electoral win. Back then, Trump often sparked big swings in stocks, commodities and currencies with surprise broadsides—only for the moves to unwind when negotiations progressed, he de-escalated, or workarounds mitigated the biggest threats to the economy or corporate profits.

The result was heightened volatility and higher tariffs on Chinese imports in particular. But stock returns over Trump's entire four years in office proved robust. This time, invest- Please turn to page A2

◆ **Greg Ip: Trump's tariff message—"I'm in charge"...A2**

Cease-Fire Lessens Tensions, But Risks Remain

By DOV LIEBER

TEL AVIV—The cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah brokered this week pulls the Middle East back from the brink of all-out war. But the deal also carries the risk of putting Israel and Iran closer to a direct confrontation.

For more than a year, Iran's allied militias, of which Hezbollah is the central member, have attacked Israel from across the Middle East—the first unified effort by Tehran's so-called axis of resistance to confront Israel. Now, degraded and damaged by a year of war with Israel, that unity is showing the first signs of cracking, leaving Iran exposed. Hezbollah accepted a cease-fire without extracting concessions for Hamas, its Iran-backed ally in Gaza. The Houthis in Yemen and Shiite militias in Iraq, though united in their hatred of Israel and the U.S., have lowered the tempo of attacks in recent weeks.

Some in Israel see the weakening of Iran and its militias as a moment to exploit, in particular by targeting Tehran's nuclear program. Others warn doing so would move the region onto more unstable footing.

"You could not have better conditions for an Israeli-American campaign against the Iranian nuclear program," said Avner Golov, a former senior director at Israel's Na- Please turn to page A6

◆ **Syrian rebels seize territory in new attack..... A6**

INSIDE



CHANDAN KHANNA/GETTY IMAGES

BUSINESS & FINANCE
Target is betting big on Taylor Swift's newest release, 'The Eras Tour Book.' **B1**



MANSION
Homeowners in Chicago corner the market on abandoned storefronts. **M1**

For Black Friday Die-Hards, The Magic Remains

* * *

Longtime fans get up early, don't mind standing in line; 'We are committed'

By KATE KING

They're still shopping like it's 2005.

Black Friday isn't the frantic shopping extravaganza of past Novembers, thanks to the rise of online shopping and retailers starting holiday promotions earlier. But these die-hard shoppers are still waking before dawn, guzzling coffee and spending all day at the mall.

"We go, we hydrate, we have it down to a science," said longtime Black Friday shopper Jennifer Passarelli, of Pittsburgh, who shops with her teenage daughter, Zoe. "We are committed. They

think we're crazy."

Why, their spouses and children ask over Thanksgiving dinner, would you want to spend your day off from work in crowded parking lots and long checkout lines? It's so unnecessary, now that our inboxes and Instagram feeds are teeming with Black Friday deals as early as October and flatscreens can be delivered to our doorsteps within hours of ordering.

But for these shoppers there's no replacing the glee of turning down an aisle and discovering the perfect gadget for that hard-to-shop-for friend or family member, an Please turn to page A9



Let's go

Executives, Investors Urge Trump to Set Deal With Venezuela

By KEJAL VYAS AND PATRICIA GARIP

American oil executives and bond investors are urging President-elect Donald Trump to abandon his first-term policy of maximum pressure on Venezuelan strongman Nicolás Maduro and instead strike a deal: more oil for fewer migrants.

The quiet lobbying effort comes as Maduro hardens his authoritarian grip on the country with threats to arrest more opposition activists.

They still challenge the July elections, in which Maduro's regime claimed victory without presenting evidence.

Some businessmen such as Harry Sargeant III, a billionaire GOP donor, are trying to show the incoming administration what they say are the perks of negotiating with Maduro.

Last week, a shipment of Venezuelan asphalt sourced by Global Oil Terminals, part of a Florida conglomerate founded by Sargeant, landed at the Please turn to page A6

Aging Scientist Races Against Time

Doctor, 84, pushes to find mental health treatment for millions, including his son

By AMY DOCKSER MARCUS

Dr. Edward Scolnick figures he needs five, maybe 10 more years to solve one of the brain's greatest mysteries.

Scolnick, 84 years old, has spent most of the past two decades working to understand and find better ways to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, mental illnesses suffered by tens of millions of people, including his son.

"I know I can crack it," said Scolnick, a noted drug developer who spent his career plumbing the building blocks of DNA for new treatments.

Long before his latest quest, Scolnick spent 22 years at Merck, mostly as head of

the drug giant's laboratory research. He led development of more than two dozen medicines, including the first approved statin to lower cholesterol, an osteoporosis treatment and an anti-HIV therapy.

He also was the company's chief scientist during the development and rollout of Merck's pain reliever Vioxx in 1999. Researchers in a published study later estimated that tens of thousands of people died from heart attacks after taking the drug before Merck pulled it off the market in 2004. The company paid \$4.85 billion to settle lawsuits with people who claimed they Please turn to page A9