

FTC seeking details on Amazon deal with AI startup Adept — source

THE US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has asked Amazon.com to provide more details on its deal to hire top executives and researchers from artificial intelligence (AI) start-up Adept, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The request reflects the FTC's growing concern about how AI deals have been put together and follows a broader review of partnerships between Big Tech and prominent AI startups.

The informal inquiry into Amazon, which has not previously been reported, centers on last month's announcement that Adept Chief Executive David Luan and others were leaving to join Amazon, which would also license some of the startup's technology.

Such inquiries do not necessarily result in an official investigation or enforcement action.

Amazon is trying to catch up with rivals Google and Microsoft, which partners with OpenAI, in developing its own large language models that can respond almost instantaneously to complicated prompts or queries.

Reuters previously reported on Amazon's efforts to establish a new organization called the Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) team, focused on developing large language models. Luan is now running the "AGI Autonomy" team, consisting of many former Adept employees, and reporting to Rohit Prasad, head of the AGI team.

Founded in 2022, Adept made a splash by raising over \$400 million from venture capital investors with the aim to train large language models to perform general tasks for

enterprise clients. Once valued at over \$1 billion, it released some open-source models but failed to launch successful commercial products. It's unclear whether Amazon has compensated Adept investors, or the details of the licensing fees.

Amazon, Adept, and the FTC declined to comment.

The regulator is already investigating a similar move by Microsoft, which hired away much of another startup, Inflection AI's leadership and employees and agreed to pay a roughly \$650 million licensing fee. The FTC is looking into whether the deal was a play to skirt merger disclosure requirements, a source told Reuters last month.

This is not Amazon's first AI startup bet. Amazon has invested \$4 billion in AI startup Anthropic since September, taking a minority stake in the San Francisco company.

The FTC earlier this year launched a study of investments and partnerships in the AI space, demanding information on Microsoft's relationship with OpenAI, and Anthropic's tie-ups with Google and Amazon.

The extensive document request, made in January, seeks details on how AI company partnerships with Big Tech influence strategy, pricing decisions, access to products and services, and personnel decisions.

US antitrust enforcers also expressed concern about Big Tech companies wielding their existing advantages in AI to shut out smaller competitors. The FTC and Justice department have staked out responsibility for potential probes into Microsoft, OpenAI, and chipmaker Nvidia. — **Reuters**

PHL to see more cyberattacks amid increasing digitalization

By Ashley Erika O. Jose

Reporter

THE PHILIPPINES will likely see more cyberattacks as threat actors take advantage of increasing digitalization in the country, an official of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) said.

"The trend is [threat actors] are getting sophisticated. Attacks are increasing, even the technology is getting sophisticated with artificial intelligence. Attackers also use it... We observe that attackers are after personal identifiable information. They want data," George P. Tardio, DICT's Critical Infostructure Evaluation and Cybersecurity Standard Division head, told *BusinessWorld* on the sidelines of a cybersecurity forum on Tuesday.

Data exfiltration resulting from leaks is one of the top cybersecurity threats in the Philippines, Mr. Tardio said, along with malware and ransomware. "We can only prepare for this particular incident. Website defacement of government agencies is becoming common. These are the common cybersecurity threats now."

Since last year, several government agencies and private companies in the Philippines have fallen victim to data breaches, including the DICT itself.

On Tuesday, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) committed to help the Philippines strengthen its critical information infrastructure (CII) to ensure a safe cyber landscape.

CII or Critical Infostructure are a collection of virtual and physical computer networks and data that

the government considers essential, like public services and communications, energy, transportation, and financial services systems.

In February, JICA announced that it is working with the Philippines on a two-year work plan to educate and train Filipino experts on cybersecurity.

JICA recognizes the urgency to bolster the Philippines' cybersecurity posture as cyberattacks are becoming a serious national issue, JICA Chief Representative to the Philippines Takema Sakamoto said.

"Cybersecurity is a rapidly growing concern for the Philippines and the entire world in line with the promotion of digital transformation. We can share our knowledge, experiences and lessons learned," Mr. Sakamoto said.

The government must take drastic actions to ensure its agen-

cies are protected against any breaches, Digital Pinoys Ronald B. Gustilo said in a Viber message.

"We have voiced this out before. The government needs to recognize that we are experiencing a cybersecurity crisis and urgent action from the government is needed. Investing in CII is a viable option now and we urge DICT to include this in their 2025 budget proposal," Mr. Gustilo said.

"As long as there will be financial, status, political, or any other gain, global and local threat actors will continue their hacks. No system is unhackable. The DICT should definitely focus on CIIs first due to their strategic importance to the country's economy, resources, and citizens," Sam Jacoba, founding president of the National Association of Data Protection Officers, said in a Viber message.

MCU sets up lab to assess, boost cyber resilience



MANILA Central University launched the Cybersecurity Posture Assessment Lab on July 10.

He said the inauguration of CPAL is a "testament to the strong collaboration between the public and private sector," which is crucial in enhancing the country's digital landscape and fortifying its cyber defense.

Mr. Uy added that the vendor-neutral laboratory can give organizations the freedom to do their testing to avoid biased assessments from firms looking to sell their cybersecurity products, he said.

CPAL is endorsed by the DICT and also received regulatory support from bodies such as Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Insurance Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the National Privacy Commission.

It was established in collaboration with Nullforge, a cybersecurity assessment provider.

MCU Executive Vice-President Chynna Roxanne R. Gonzalez said the maintenance of the facility will be handled by external partners like Blackfire. Alongside the lab's launch, MCU is also incorporating a cybersecurity program into its Bachelor of Science in Information Technology curriculum.

CPAL will also offer certification programs aligned with industry standards, providing continuous learning and development opportunities for professionals, she added. "We're offering it already this coming August... In terms of the manpower, the certification is already open." — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

Oil prices slip 1% on Chinese demand jitters

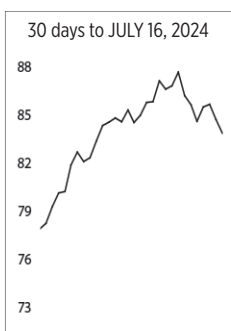
HOUSTON — Oil prices settled more than 1% lower on Tuesday, the third straight day of losses, on worries of a slowing Chinese economy crimping demand, though declines were stemmed by a growing consensus the US Federal Reserve could begin cutting its key interest rate as soon as September.

Brent futures closed down \$1.12 or 1.3% at \$83.73 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell \$1.15 or 1.4% to \$80.76.

The world's second-largest economy grew 4.7% in April-June, official data showed, its slowest rate since the first quarter of 2023 and missing a 5.1% forecast in a Reuters poll. It slowed from the previous quarter's 5.3% expansion, hamstrung by a protracted property downturn and job insecurity.

Meanwhile, the global economy is set for modest growth over the next two years amid cooling

ASIA-DUBAI (JULY CONTRACT)

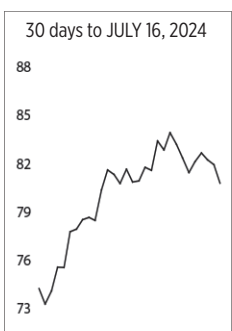


	July 10	11	12	15	16
\$/bbl	84.58	85.48	85.64	84.68	83.84
Average (July 1-16)	\$85.83				
Average (June 3-28)	\$82.54				

activity in the US, a bottoming out in Europe and stronger consumption and exports for China, but risks to the path abound, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday

In the US, crude oil inventories fell by 4.4 million barrels last week, according to market sources

NEW YORK-WTI (AUGUST CONTRACT)



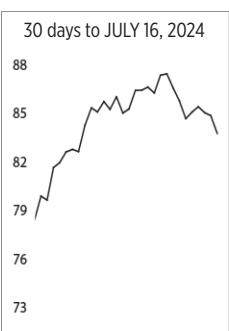
	July 10	11	12	15	16
\$/bbl	82.10	82.62	82.21	81.91	80.76
Average (July 1-16)	\$82.42				
Average (June 3-28)	\$78.65				

citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday. Stocks on average were expected to fall by 33,000 barrels last week, according to a Reuters poll on Tuesday.

Government data on inventories is expected on Wednesday.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Monday the three US inflation

LONDON-BRENT (SEPTEMBER CONTRACT)



	July 10	11	12	15	16
\$/bbl	85.08	85.40	85.03	84.85	83.73
Average (July 1-16)	\$85.72				
Average (June 3-28)	\$83.00				

Source: REUTERS

readings over the second quarter of this year "add somewhat to confidence" that the pace of price increases is returning to the central bank's target in a sustainable fashion. Market participants interpreted the comments as indicating that a turn to interest rate cuts may not be far off.

US retail sales were also unchanged in June, a show of consumer resilience that boosts economic growth prospects for the second quarter, helping assuage fears of a sharp slowdown in the economy.

Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler said it will be appropriate to begin easing monetary policy later this year if economic conditions continue to evolve favorably.

But some analysts cautioned about excess bullishness as expected weakness in some macroeconomic data from the US could still indirectly hurt oil demand in the near term. — **Reuters**

SPOT PRICES

TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024

METAL

PALLADIUM free \$/troy oz	951.00
PALLADIUM JMI base, \$/troy oz	955.00
PLATINUM free \$/troy oz	990.38
PLATINUM JMI base \$/troy oz	993.00
KRUGGERAND, fob \$/troy oz	2,409.00
IRIDIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	4,715.00
RHODIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	4,590.00

GRAINS (July 11, 2024)

(FOB Bangkok basis at every Thursday)	
FRAGRANT (100%) 1 st Class, \$/ton	929.00
FRAGRANT (100%) 2 nd Class, \$/ton	901.00
RICE (5%) White Thai- \$/ton	590.00
RICE (10%) White Thai- \$/ton	589.00
RICE (15%) White Thai- \$/ton	573.00
RICE (25%) White Thai- \$/ton (Super)	573.00
BROKER RICE A-1 Super \$/ton	447.00

FOOD

COCOA ICCO Dly (SDR/mt)	5,792.14
COCOA ICCO \$/mt	7,687.68
COFFEE ICA comp '2001 cts/lb	243.81
SUGAR ISA FOB Daily Price, Carib. port cts/lb	19.73
SUGAR ISA 15-day ave.	19.94

LIFFE COFFEE

New Robusta 10 MT - \$/ton

	High	Low	Sett	Psett
Sept.	4,666	4,549	4,572	4,583
Jan.	4,273	4,182	4,196	4,198
Mar.	4,104	4,030	4,036	4,031
May	3,928	3,900	3,911	3,897

LIFFE COCOA

(Ldn)-10 MT-E/ton

	High	Low	Sett	Psett
July	8,141	8,141	7,488	8,214
Sept.	7,082	6,511	6,520	7,039
Mar.	5,127	4,785	4,796	5,127
May	4,928	4,652	4,669	4,932

COCONUT

MANILA COPRA (based on 6% moisture)	
Peso/100kg	Buyer/Seller
Lag/Qzn/Luc	24 3,800.00/3,850.00
Philippine Coconut Oil - Crude	
CIF NY/NOLA	71.50
FOB RAIL/NOLA	76.50
COCANUT OIL (PHIL/IDN), \$ per ton	
CIF Europe	
July/Aug.'24	0.00/1,465.00
Aug./Sept'24	0.00/1,465.00
Sept./Oct.'24	1,400.00/1,470.00
Oct./Nov.'24	0.00/1,475.00

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE

LME FINAL CLOSING PRICES, US\$/MT

	3 MOS.
ALUMINUM H.G.	2,406.00
ALUMINUM Alloy	2,560.00
COPPER	9,663.50
LEAD	2,184.00
NICKEL	16,594.00
TIN	33,171.00
ZINC	2,885.00

US stocks notch record closing high; small caps surge

NEW YORK — Wall Street stocks rose and the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit an all-time closing high on Tuesday after US retail sales data supported the view that the US Federal Reserve is approaching its easing cycle, reining in inflation while avoiding a recession.

All three major US stock indexes advanced on the day, but weaker mega-cap growth stocks, led by Nvidia Corp. and Microsoft Corp., capped the tech-heavy Nasdaq's gains.

Economically sensitive small-caps extended their rally. The Russell 2000 scored a fifth straight day of gains greater than 1%, its longest winning streak since April 2000. The index gained 3.5%, touching its highest level since January 2022.

Dow transportation stocks also outperformed the broader

indexes, logging its biggest one-day percentage gain since November and reaching its highest closing level since August 2023 as investors increasingly focused on undervalued areas of the market.

Value stocks, which have underperformed their growth peers and the broader S&P 500 so far this year, jumped 1.5%.

Economic data on Tuesday included stronger-than-expected retail sales reported by the Commerce department. This provided reassurance that consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of the US economy, has stayed resilient despite restrictive monetary policy, and eased fears that high interest rates could tip the economy into recession.

Second-quarter earnings season is ramping up.

UnitedHealth Group jumped 6.5% after reporting consensus-topping profit, lifting the blue chip Dow and the S&P 500 Health Care index to all-time highs.

Bank of America's second-quarter profit beat expectations, and underwriting fees rose as capital markets resurged. The second-largest US bank also provided upbeat net interest income guidance, sending its shares up 5.3%.

Morgan Stanley rose 0.9% even after the investment bank posted disappointing wealth management revenue.

Charles Schwab slid 10.2% after reporting a dip in interest income.

Tinder parent Match jumped 7.5% on news that activist investor Starboard has a stake of over 6.5% in the company.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 742.76 points or 1.85%

to 40,954.48; the S&P 500 gained 35.98 points or 0.64% at 5,667.20; and the Nasdaq Composite added 36.77 points or 0.2% at 18,509.34.

Of the 11 major sectors in the S&P 500, industrials enjoyed the largest percentage gains, while technology and communication services were the only two sectors to end in negative territory.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners on the New York Stock Exchange by a 4.58-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 3.5-to-1 ratio favored advancers.

The S&P 500 posted 94 new 52-week highs and three new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 305 new highs and 29 new lows.

Volume on US exchanges was 11.83 billion shares, compared with the 11.68 billion average for the full session over the last 20 trading days. — **Reuters**

Gold sprints to all-time high as rate cut hopes boost demand

GOLD PRICES jumped more than 1% to a record high on Tuesday, as investors flocked to the safe-haven asset after comments from US Federal Reserve officials cemented expectations of a US interest rate cut in September.

Spot gold gained 1.8% to \$2,464.82 per ounce by 2:18 p.m. ET (1818 GMT).

US gold futures settled 1.6% higher to \$2,467.80 per ounce.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell on Monday said recent inflation data bolstered policy makers' confidence that price pressures are on a sustainable path to remain low, reassuring markets that the US rate cut is on the cards in September.

San Francisco Fed Bank President Mary Daly also said "confidence is growing" that inflation is heading toward the US central bank's 2% goal.

Lower US interest rates put pressure on the dollar and bond yields, which increases the appeal of non-yielding bullion. Gold prices have risen more than 19% so far this year, after a 13% rise in 2023.

"Thanks largely to weakness in economic data, and falling inflationary pressures, bond yields are continuing to remain under pressure," said Fawad Razaqzada, market analyst at City Index.

"This is helping to boost the appeal of low- and zero-yielding assets, and thereby keeping the gold outlook positive."

Gold's rise came despite a stronger dollar, with the US unit up 0.1% against its rivals, after a reading of retail sales proved to be firmer than expected.

Among other metals, spot silver rose 0.8% to \$31.25 per ounce; platinum gained 0.3% to \$998.25; and palladium climbed 1.1% to \$960.51. — **Reuters**