

Assets in Ant Group's flagship money-market fund plummet

Before Chinese regulators forced Ant to call off its blockbuster IPO, the fund had more than \$180 billion in AUM

(AUM) at Ant Group Co.'s highly popular money-market fund fell to their lowest level in ears after pressure from China's reg-llators forced the company to sit out

ulatorsforced the company to sit out an industrywide boom. Data for the second quarter, released Wednesky, showed hat the Tanhong Yu' Bao money-market fund had the equivalent of SI20. bil-lion of assets at the end of June, down 20% from three months earlier to a level last seen in late 2016. Last autumn, before Chinese regulators. forced Ant to call off its blockbuster initial public offering, the giant fund had more than \$180 billion in assets

had more than SI80 billion in assets under management. Chinesebillionaire Jack Ma's Anti's the majority shareholder in Tianhong Asset Management, the company that fund. The fund's name means "left-over treasure," and it is sold on Ant's ubiquitous Alipay app. Close to half of China's population was invested in it at the end of 2020, and many large scabed money in their disful availets. stashed money in their digital wallets in the money-market fund to earn

The cans

income before spending it. At its peak in early 2018, the fund At its peak in early 2018, the fund managed assets totaling 1.69 trillion yuan, the equivalent of \$2606 billion at present exchange rates, and was the largest such vehicle in the world. It used to produce returns far in excess of Chinese bank deposit rates by buying bank certificates of deposit and other higher-yielding products. Its rapid growth and large size drew regulatory scruting at the time, lead-ing Ant to impose investment caps and one unity fur lea nonney-mar-

Its rapid growth and large size drew regulatory scrutiny at the time, ket ing Ant to impose investment caps and openupits Yu e Bao money-mar ket investing platform to rival prod-

ace: Delhi ite: 21" July 2021



Billionaire Jack Ma's Ant is the majority shareholder in Tianhong Asset Management, the firm that manages the eight-year-old mutual fund. BLOOMBER

with the matter said. In response to the April order, the fund has refrained from chasing better yields or actively promoting itself to inves-tors, the people said. One concern was that Ant could be were subsequently scrapped after the giant fund started shrinking and losing investors to other funds. More recently, the original Tian-

hong Yu e Bao fund has come under fresh pressure. In April this year, as part of a five-point truble, that could

vorthaul of Antices financial registric for the function of th ing its second-quarter report Wednesday, the fund's managers said

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interest rates in China have been on a slight downward trend because of

abundant liquidity in the financial abundant inquicity in the mancial system and the country's prudent monetary policy. They added that China's economy has been on a recovery trend but that momentum slowed in the second quarter. Tianhong didn't go into detail about they the formed cosets showed

about why the fund's assets shrank significantly. The money-market significantly. The money-market fund's seven-day annualized yield was 2.093% at the end of June, slightly lower than that of some rival funds sold on the same platform. For the second quarter, Tianhong reported a net return rate of 0.5255% and 4.5 billion yuan in profit after frees

es. Apart from Ant's flagship fund, iere are 28 money-market funds verseen by other asset managers on the the firm's Yu'e Bao platform that managed a total of 1.7 trillion yuan as managed a total of 1.7 irillion yuanas of July 20, according to financial data provider Wind. These fundshavent't been told to downsize, according to people familiar with the matter. Some of the other funds are also solid through other distribution channels. The bigger a fund is, the more troublescome it could potentially beif it runs into problems, said Aidan Shevin, head of International global liquidity portfolio fund management. He said China's biggest funds tied to e-wallets were also very widely

-wallets were also very widely wned. "So if anything were to happen, that would be very concerning

per, nia wondoe very concerning, he said. Ant is at a disadvantage even as the mutual-fund industry, which it helped bring into the mainstream in China, is enjoying rapid growth. After a boom in equity funds, mon-ey-market funds have enjoyed renewed interest recently as inves-rom beau alle late or fairing setment.

tors have piled into safer investments and sought shelter from volatile stock prices. Overall assets in money-mar-ket mutual funds rose to a record

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\$1.49 trillion at the end of May, up 149 51.49 (Thinoi at the end of May, up 14%) from a year ago, according to the most recent available official data. Chinese households have become more focused on saving money since the pandemic. "Chinese mutual funds have

connese mutual runds nave potential to further grow," said Li Huang, an analyst with Fitch Ratings She said the industry's assets, com-pared with the size of the economy stillagged behind markets in the U.S. said Li rael has set up a senior inter

sraei nas set up a senior mer-ministerial team to look into growing allegations that spy-ware sold by an Israeli cyber firm has been abused on a global scale, an Israeli source said on Wednesday, while add-ing that an export review was unlikely. unlikely

unlikely. The team is headed by Israel's National Security Council, which answers to Prime Minister Natali Bennett and has broader areas of expertise that he Defence Koports of NSO Group's Pega-sus software, the source said. "This event is beyond the Defence Ministry purview," the source said, referring to poten-tial diplomatic blowback after prominent media reports this

pared with the size of the economy, still laggedbehand markets in the US. and Europe. Stronger regulation and lessconcentratics of the size of the size of the market growth, bassaid. Money-market funds invest prima-rily in certificates of deposit issued by banks, as well as other short-term debts. They make up nearly 42% of China's overall mutual-fund industry, a much higher proportion than in the US and other markets. These funds for more attractive yields in China than in developed benchmark interest rates. As of 20 July, the average seven-day annual-ized yield of 688 money-market funds tracket by Wind stood at 2.09%, Meanwhile (tech companies including Ant and Frenent Holdings Lid, have made it easy to by and self money-market funds through their e-wallets

e-wallets. Liu Mei, a 22-year-old college stu-dent in Beijing, said she and many of her schoolmates were more inclined to park their money in money-market funds after the pandemic, given greater feelings of financial insecu-rity.

Ms. Liu said she invests spare cash Ms. Liu said she invests spare cash given to her by her parents every month, usually worth a few hundred dollars, in a money-market fund through her Yu'e Bao account. She said she redeems whenever she needs advarss, in a money-market name through her Yue Bao account. She discocci in the Pegasus case, saidsheredeems whenevershe needs money to spend. S2021 DOW JONES & COMPANY, INC S2021 DOW JONES & COMPANY, INC

to look into NSO spyware charges of the Israeli team and

A probe led by the Paris-based Forbidden Stories has alleged that Pegasus has been used for hacking smartphones.

Israel sets up panel

requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue, deemed it "doubtful" that new curbs would be placed on Pega sus exports.

sus exports. Stopping short of describing the team's task as a formal investigation, the source said: "The objective is to find out what happened, to look into this issue and learn lessons."

this issue and learn lessons." Commenting on the devel-opment, an NSO spokesperson said: "We welcome any deci-sion made by the government of Israed, and we are convinced that the company's activities are without flaw." Bennett's office declined comment. Addressing a cyber conference on Wednesday, the prime min-ister did not mention the NSO affair. A global investigation published on Sunday by 17 media oranizions, led by the media organizations, led by the Paris-based non-profit journal Paris-basednon-profit journal-ism group Forbidden Stories, said Pegasus had been used in attempted and successful hacks of smartphones belonging to journalists, government offi-cials and human rights activists. NSO has rejected the report-ing by the media partners, say-ing it was "full of wrong assumptions and uncorrobo-rated theories". Pegasus is intended for use on bly zor:

intended for use only by gov-ernment intelligence and law enforcement agencies to fight terrorism and crime, NSO said.

JPMorgan awards CEO stock options as retention bonus

prominent media reports this week of suspected abuses of

Pegasus in France, Mexico, India, Morocco and Iraq. On Wednesday, French

On Wednesday, French prime minister Jean Castexsaid president Emmanuel Macron had called for a series of investi-gations to be carried out into the Pegasus spyware case. Macron's phone was on a list of potential targets for possible surveillance on behalf of Moreone in the Decrement enco

board gave chief executive officer (CEO) Jamie Dimon new stock options as a retention bonus, signaling that the largest US bank wants its chief executive to stay for seval more years. The 1.5 million options will

increase in value so long as JPMorgan's stock price rises Jamie Dimon will be able to continue to exercise the ne and become exercisable in five years, the bank said in a regula-tory filing. JPMorgan's shares options if he leaves the bank for an elected or unelected government job

tory iming JrAvorgans snares (socient as 149,47 on Tuesday, after rising about 18% thisyear. This special award reflects the board's desire for Mr. Dimon to continue to endure to adults for the WALL STREET JOURNAL further sig.

bank said.

"In making the special award, the board considered the importance of Mr. Dimon's





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even years, people familiar with the matter have told *The* Wall Street Journal. The new options are in addition to his regular compensation, the

regular compensation, the bank said. The chief executive has had two significant health scares in recent years. He was diagnosed with throat cancer in 2014 and made a full recovery. Then in March 2020 he rushed to have emer-ical is New York to have emerpital in New York to have emer-gency heart surgery to repair an acute aortic dissection.

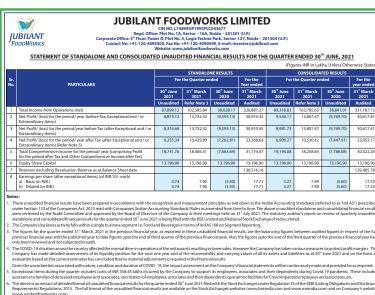
an acute aortic dissection. In May, PPM or gan appointed two potential suc-cessors to Mr. Dimon to leaditis sprawling consumer hanking operation Marianne Lake and lennifer Piepszak took the reins offits consumer and com-munity hank. The move came two years after the bank estab-lished them as front - numers to one daw lead the comprove







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PMorgan Chase & Co.'s (R.K. Suthar)

nificant number of years," the bank said.

bank since 2005 and maintains that his retirement isn't a near-term event. The bank's board earlier this year indicated that it wanted him to stay on for five to

Mr. Dimon, 65, has led the

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options if he leaves the bank for an elected or unelected gov-



