

IMF Calls For Greece Debt Relief



An anti-EU protester unfurls a Greek national flag next to riot police on the steps in front of the parliament building during a demonstration of about five hundred people in Athens, Greece July 13, 2015.

BRUSSELS (Reuters) – A secret International Monetary Fund study showed Greece needs far more debt relief than European governments have been willing to contemplate so far, as Germany heaped pressure on Athens on Tuesday to reform and win back its partners’ trust.

The IMF’s stark warning on Athens’ debt was leaked as Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras struggled to persuade deeply unhappy leftist lawmakers to vote for a package of austerity measures and liberal economic reforms to secure a new bailout.

The study, seen by Reuters, said European countries would have to give Greece a 30-year grace period on servicing all its European debt, including new loans, and a dramatic

maturity extension. Or else they must make annual transfers to the Greek budget or accept “deep up-front haircuts” on existing loans.

The Debt Sustainability Analysis is likely to sharpen fierce debate in Germany about whether to lend Greece yet more money.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble made clear in Brussels on Tuesday that some members of the Berlin government think it would make more sense for Athens to leave the euro zone temporarily rather than take another bailout.

Assuming Athens fulfils its end of the bargain this week by enacting a swathe of painful measures, the German parliament is due to meet in a special session on Friday to debate whether to authorize the govern-

ment to open new loan negotiations.

“The dramatic deterioration in debt sustainability points to the need for debt relief on a scale that would need to go well beyond what has been under consideration to date - and what has been proposed by the ESM,” the IMF said, referring to the European Stability Mechanism bailout fund.

An EU source said euro zone finance ministers and leaders had been aware of the confidential IMF figures when they agreed on Monday on a roadmap to a third bailout.

IMF Managing-Director Christine Lagarde was present but the IMF did not make the updated assessment public, in contrast to a previous study which was released in Washington on July 2.

Hong Kong Student Leaders Charged Over Protests



Student leaders Joshua Wong (R) and Nathan Law smile outside a police station in Hong Kong, China July 14, 2015.

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Two Hong Kong students who rose to fame during demonstrations that angered Beijing last year were charged on Tuesday with obstructing police during a protest earlier in the year.

The charges were related to a protest outside the office of China’s top official in the city, the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, on June 11 last year.

Joshua Wong, the thin, bespectacled head of student activist group, Scholarism, and Nathan Law, secretary general of the

Hong Kong Federation of Students, were charged at a police station in Hong Kong, then released on bail and told to report to court on Friday, according to police documents they showed reporters.

Wong said the evidence against him was weak and he did not see himself obstructing police in a video shown to him at the police station. Law said he saw some pushing and shoving but needed to discuss with his lawyer what to do next.

Wong said less than 30 people took part in the June 11 protest. He confirmed that they had burnt

a copy of a controversial policy paper from China’s State Council that reminded Hong Kong that there were limits to its freedom.

A former British colony, Hong Kong was returned to Chinese Communist Party rule in 1997 under a “one country, two systems” form of government that gave it separate laws and wide-ranging autonomy but reserved ultimate authority for Beijing.

“Obviously, the police have their own political agenda, which is to crack down on activists like us,” Wong told reporters.

Police said in a statement they handled every case in a fair and impartial manner, irrespective of the background of the people involved, and would take appropriate action against any illegal acts.

About 30 activists turned up at the police station to support Wong and Law. They carried yellow umbrellas that have come to symbolize last year’s protests and chanted “Political persecution is shameful” and “Burning the White Paper is not a crime”.

They also called for Hong Kong’s leader, Leung Chun-ying, who they see as close to Beijing, to step down.

Two Pilots Killed in Russian Bomber Crash

MOSCOW (AFP) - Two pilots were killed when a strategic bomber with seven people on board crashed in far eastern Russia on Tuesday, the defense ministry said, the latest in a string of military aircraft accidents.

“The search and rescue team of the eastern military district has found where two members of the Tu-95 bomber landed,” the Russian defense ministry said in a statement.

“Both pilots were killed,” the defense ministry said in the statement carried by Russian news agencies.

“According to reports from the scene, the pilots were killed during landing,” said the statement.

The defense ministry had earlier

damage on the ground, the defense ministry said.

The five surviving crew members have been sent to a military hospital in Khabarovsk to undergo medical examinations. Their lives are not at risk, said the defense ministry.

All Tu-95 bombers have been grounded until the circumstances surrounding the latest incident have been elucidated, the ministry said.

Over the past weeks, the Russian military has reported numerous accidents that have raised questions about the safety of the country’s military aircraft.

In June, the army reported an accident involving a similar Tu-95



A Russian Tupolev Tu-95 bomber (file photo)

said that the jet’s seven crew members, who were taking part in a training flight outside of the city of Khabarovsk, had managed to parachute out.

The bomber was not carrying a combat payload at the time of the incident and the crash caused no

jet whose engine caught fire during take-off in the far eastern Amur region.

Earlier this month, two pilots of a Sukhoi Su-24 aircraft were killed when it crashed during a training mission in the far east of the country.

China Urges Philippines to Ditch South China Sea Case

BEIJING (AP) — China urged the Philippines on Tuesday to ditch its attempt to solve South China Sea territorial disputes with an international tribunal and instead negotiate with Beijing directly, following the arbitration panel’s latest request for input from China.

The Philippines has asked the tribunal in The Hague to declare China’s claims to virtually all the South China Sea invalid, saying Beijing’s actions have trampled on other nations’ rights.

China contends the tribunal doesn’t have jurisdiction, and has refused to participate. The tribunal, which operates under the U.N. Convention of the Law of the Sea, held a weeklong hearing ending Monday to address China’s contention. It said that Beijing has until Aug. 17 to comment on the hearing, and that it should make a ruling on the issue this year.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying on Tuesday reiterated China’s opposition to the arbitration, and said China “will never accept the unilateral attempts to turn to a third party to solve the disputes.”

“China urges the Philippines to

come back to the right track of resolving disputes through negotiation and consultation,” she said in a statement.

The Philippines praised the tribunal’s effort to prod China again to join the case, saying the five-man arbitration body has been fair and transparent in its handling of Manila’s complaints against Beijing.

“We have asked China to participate and we continue to extend the invitation for them to explain their side,” Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose said by phone in Manila.

China, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan have been contesting ownership of the resource-rich South China Sea. The United States and other countries have expressed concerns over China’s island-building in the region that they say has been provocative and has damaged vast coral reefs in the disputed waters.

Beijing says fears that it would eventually limit freedom of navigation and overflight to back its claims are unfounded.

“China urges the Philippines to



PYONGYANG (Press TV) – North Korea has dismissed as “hysteric rage” Washington’s allegations that a biotech institute in Pyongyang produces biological weapons, including anthrax, challenging the entire US Congress to come and inspect the facility.

A spokesman for North Korea’s National Defense Commission said that the facility is only used to manufacture pesticides, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on Monday.

He made the comments in reaction to a report that appeared on the website of the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University last week, claiming that the North Korean government mass-produces anthrax for the military.

“A thousand pairs of ears cannot match a pair of eyes,” the unnamed spokesman said, adding, “Come here right now, with all the 535 members of the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as the imbecile secretaries and deputy secretaries of the government who have made their voices hoarse screaming for new sanctions.”

He said that the entire US Congress and others then could observe “the awe-inspiring sight of the Pyongyang Bio-technical Institute.”

OTTAWA (Press TV) – Canada and Ukraine are scheduled to sign a free trade agreement during a visit by Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk to the Canadian capital, Ottawa.

Yatsenyuk and his Canadian counterpart, Stephen Harper, are slated to hold a signing ceremony in Ottawa on Tuesday, when the former is due to arrive in Canada.

“A free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine would further strengthen our partnership and create jobs and prosperity for Canadians and Ukrainians alike,” Rick Roth, a spokesman for the Canadian Trade Minister Ed Fast, wrote in a Monday email to Canadian broadcaster CBC News.

Harper met with Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, on June 6 and pledged to send negotiators to conclude the agreement “as soon as possible.”

Trade between the two countries reached \$192 million last year, down from \$332.5 million in 2013.

The Ukrainian economy has taken a nosedive following three years of recession and over a year of conflict in the eastern parts of the country.

Ukraine’s mainly Russian-speaking regions in the east have experienced deadly clashes between pro-Russia forces and the army since Kiev launched military operations to silence pro-Moscow forces there in mid-April 2014.

NEW DELHI (Press TV) – A deadly stampede on the onset of the Maha Pushkaralu festival on the banks of India’s Godavari river leaves at least 27 participants dead.

The Tuesday incident in the city of Rajahmundry, on the border of the twin states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in southern India, took place about two hours after the festival started at dawn.

“Twenty-seven people have now been confirmed dead in the stampede and another 29 are injured,” Parakala Prabhakar, a spokesman for Andhra Pradesh’s Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, told AFP.

Meanwhile, a local district official, H. Arun Kumar, said the number of injured was 40. However, he confirmed that 27 people were killed.

Satyamurthy Chebolu, a volunteer for an organisation that helps run the festival, said the stampede happened when crowds around the steps leading to the water, known as ghats, started pushing from the back and that turned into a stampede where people got trampled.

“The police tried to stop them but the crowd easily pushed the police away,” he said.

“The crowd was huge -- there were maybe 20,000 people in the area, and maybe 3,000 people in the stampede. The ghat is just not built for that many people. It was also unbearably hot, so many people were anxious to cool off in the water,” he added.