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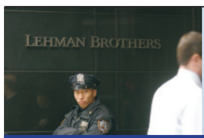
Business Today

WEDNESDAY 17 March 2010 - **SUPPLEMENT ISSUE NO. 625**



In collaboration with:
KAMRA TAL-PERITI

EU-Greece contingency plan 'prudent but unlikely'

European ministers stressed yesterday that a contingency plan for saving Greece from bankruptcy with emergency loans was "simply prudent planning and was unlikely to be enacted."

As the eurozone tackled a government debt crisis that has exposed deep divisions, European Union ministers made it clear that the Union sees the mechanism as a "necessary evil that must be prepared only if the health of the euro currency is endangered."

The 27 ministers echoed their eurozone counterparts by backing the measures Athens has already undertaken to curb spending and raise taxes.

The onus will therefore remain firmly on Greece to maintain a tight watch on national budget surgery.

They "endorsed the European Commission's assessment of Greece's fiscal situation," which held that Greece is "on track" to deliver on its promises, said EU Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn after the talks ended.

Spanish Finance Minister Elena Salgado, chairing the talks, said of the contingency plan that "we are absolutely not at the stage where we are imagining (its) use."

German Deputy Finance Minister Joerg Asmussen said the eurozone "did not take a decision on concrete aid" on Monday night and "does not anticipate a decision at the EU summit" next week either.

Greek finance minister George Papaconstantinou (L) greeting EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn

Greece has complained that the yield on bonds it sells in order to raise money on international markets is too high at above six per cent. But eurozone ministers intimated any EU aid would also come at a heavy price.

Welcoming the "serious headway" made in drawing up the contingency plan, which reflects a step-change in moves to give the EU a greater say in pan-national economic governance, the Greek finance minister said he expected the bond yields Athens has to offer would now fall.

"It is clear we are not happy paying the kind of markups and spreads we are paying at the moment," said George Papaconstantinou.

However, he said borrowing costs had fallen to a rate of 6.3 per cent on the last bond issuance earlier this month and that "the market is reacting positively to the measures we are taking."

"It is a question of time," he said, predicting that the rates "will go down."

If money is ever released, it will be by all 15 of Greece's partners in the euro currency area and only if ordered by leaders of the 27 EU nations.

Eurozone finance ministers said the objective of safeguarding financial stability in the euro area as a whole would mean "strong incentives to return to markets as soon as possible," or high rates.

Groaning under 300 billion euros (410 billion dollars) of debt, Greece is looking to raise 54 billion euros this year just to finance the debt but is struggling to do so without paying premium interest rates.

Oil price rebounds as OPEC meets today

World oil prices rebounded slightly yesterday, after recent heavy losses, with traders on tenterhooks on the eve of a key production meeting of the OPEC oil cartel in Vienna.

Oil price stood at US$ 80.22 a barrel

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for April delivery rose 42 cents to US$80.22 a barrel.

London's Brent North Sea crude for April delivery was up 48 cents to US$78.37. The contract expires at the close.

The market bounced back slightly after diving the previous day on the back of the strong dollar, and concerns about US energy demand and possible Chinese moves to cool its booming economy.

Key OPEC members said last Monday that there was no need for the cartel to change its official oil output target owing to the current supply, demand and price situation amid a world economic recovery.

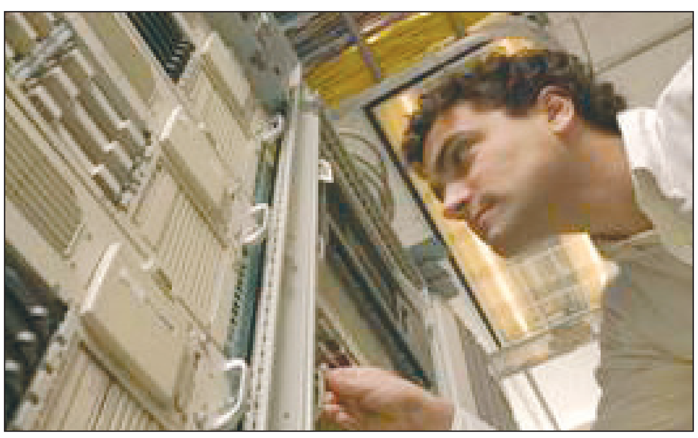
The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has no need to "disturb" a balanced oil market, Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Nuaimi told media ahead of the cartel's latest meeting to set production levels.

Asked if OPEC should change its official output quota at a meeting to be held in Vienna on today, Nuaimi, whose country is the cartel's biggest oil producer, replied: "Why should we change? The market is in balance, the price is great, inventories are coming down, so why do we need to do anything?"

He added: "Based on what we see, everybody's happy with the market. We are extremely happy with the market. The economy is doing well, (and it) will do better down the road. I don't see any reason to disturb this happy situation."

The cartel's second largest producer Iran meanwhile said that OPEC should not raise its official output ceiling as there was still no sign of any increase in world demand.

Retirement schemes force losses on GO plc



Loss in revenue was achieved notwithstanding a significant increase in connections

GO plc registered a significant loss in revenues and profitability during 2009, as voluntary retirement schemes have reportedly cost the quad-play telecoms provider a staggering €11.5 million during the same year.

Financial results published yesterday reveal that GO plc have still managed to make a €7.4 million operating profit, however it is €5.9 million short of the €13.3 million the group registered in 2008.

In a statement, GO plc explained that the loss in revenue was achieved notwithstanding a significant increase in the number of customer connections, which amounted to 480,000 during the financial year.

It explained that both 2009 and 2008 results include various one time charges for voluntary retirement costs of €11.5 million (2008: €2 million), write back of provision for pensions of €0.3 million (2008: charge of €12.9 million), impairment loss on receivables of €3.1 million (2008: €0.3 million) and release of financial liabilities of €3.2million (2008: €0.2 million).

Normalised operating profit for 2009 amounted to €18.6 million as against €28.3 million in 2008. The Group achieved a normalised EBITDA of €42.6 million representing an EBITDA margin of 34.4 per cent. Comparative figures show normalised EBITDA of €52.2 million and margin of 40.3 per cent. This decline in performance is primarily the result of lower revenue. In fact, Group turnover amounted to €123.7 million, a decline of 4.5 per cent over 2008. Group revenues have also been impacted, positively, by the results of the BM Group in which the Company acquired a 60 per cent strategic shareholding in April.

The 2009 results have been negatively affected by the Group's share of the results of Forthnet. Forthnet, however, continues to register growth in its client base, revenue streams and EBITDA levels and GO expressed confidence that in the medium term this investment will start to make a positive contribution to the results of GO.

The Board of Directors is recommending the payment of a final dividend of €0.10c net of tax per share for the approval of the shareholders at the next Annual General Meeting to be held on 17 May 2010 which dividend will be payable on May 21. This net dividend will be payable to shareholders who will be on the register of shareholders as at April 16, 2010. **See page 2**