

THE LEBANON BRIEF

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FINANCIAL MARKETS	3
Equity Market	3
Foreign Exchange Market	5
Money & Treasury Bills Markets	5
Eurobond Market	6
ECONOMIC STATISTICS & INDICATORS	7
Airport Passenger Activity Up 16.5% in January 2008	7
Budget Deficit Reaches LP116B in January 2008	7
BoP Registers \$259.2M Deficit in January 2008	7
Industrial Exports Increased 14% in January 2008	8
ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL NEWS	9
Political Tension Cools Commercial Property but Heats up its Residential Side	9
February Consumer Confidence Index Up 23 Points	9
Solidere Among Largest 100 Companies in the Arab World	9
CORPORATE DEVELOPMENTS	10
Solidere Total Assets Reach \$2.4B in Mid-2007	10
Al-Mustathmer Launches Two Commodity Funds	10
FOCUS IN BRIEF	11
Lebanese Unemployment and its Characteristics	11

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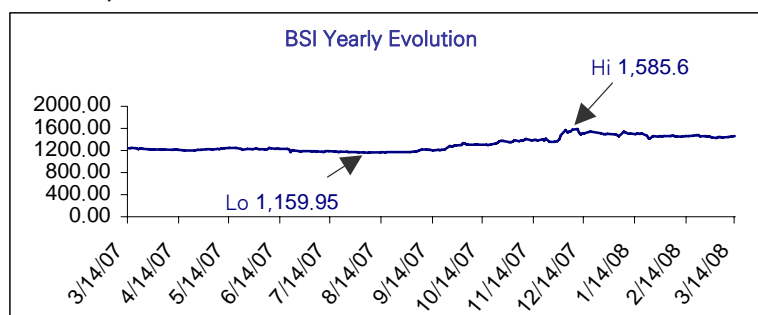
FINANCIAL MARKETS

Equity Market

Stock Market

	15/03/08	07/03/08	% Change
BLOM Stock Index †	1,462.441	1,437.47	1.74%
Total Volume Traded	655,573	626,470	4.65%
Total Value Traded	8,756,708	9,660,432	(9.35%)

†22 January 1996 = 1000



Banking Sector

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	% Change
BLOM (GDR)	BSE	\$90.05	\$89.00	1.18%
BLOM Listed	BSE	\$81.55	\$81.55	0.00%
BLOM (GDR)	LSE	\$89.50	\$89.50	0.00%
Audi (GDR)	BSE	\$80.10	\$72.15	11.02%
Audi Listed	BSE	\$70.00	\$70.00	0.00%
Audi (GDR)	LSE	\$77.80	72.10	7.91%
Byblos (C)	BSE	\$2.20	\$2.17	1.38%
Byblos Priority	BSE	\$2.21	\$2.22	(0.45%)
Bank of Beirut (C)	BSE	\$12.74	\$12.74	0.00%
BLC (C)	BSE	\$7.50	\$8.00	(6.25%)
Fransabank (B)	OTC	\$28.00	\$25.00	12.00%
BEMO (C)	BSE	\$4.00	\$4.00	0.00%

Banks' Pref. Shares

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	% Change
Banks' Preferred Shares Index †		103.42	103.42	0.00%
BLOM Preferred 2002	BSE	\$102.00	\$102.00	0.00%
BLOM Preferred 2004	BSE	\$101.20	\$101.00	0.20%
BLOM Preferred 2005	BSE	\$101.20	\$101.20	0.00%
BEMO Preferred 2006	BSE	\$102.00	\$102.00	0.00%
Audi Pref. C	BSE	\$27.25	\$27.25	0.00%
Audi Pref. D	BSE	\$105.50	\$105.50	0.00%
Byblos Preferred	BSE	\$104.00	\$104.00	0.00%
Bank of Beirut Pref. B	BSE	\$11.50	\$11.50	0.00%
Bank of Beirut Pref. C	BSE	\$24.85	\$24.85	0.00%
Bank of Beirut Pref. D	BSE	\$25.00	\$25.00	0.00%

† 25 August 2006 = 100

This week's two main driving forces on the Beirut Stock Exchange have been, the relative political optimism in electing a president and the rumors behind bank Audi's merger. These in turn, broke the monotony of the preceding months' declining trend. The BLOM Stock Index (BSI) registered a relative hike recording 1,462.44 up 1.7% from last week and down 2.62% year to date. Although total value traded decreased by 9.35% to \$8.7M, total volume traded rose 4.65% to 655,573 shares. Contrary to previous weeks, banking sector trading value outweighed that of Solidere stock trading at a ratio of 6 to 4. Out of the 31 listed stocks, fourteen exchanged hands this week, where seven rose, four stabilized and three declined.

From this week's fourteen traded stocks, nine were banking sector shares. BLOM GDR gained 1.19% to close at \$90.05 on a total of 13,190 stocks valued at \$1.2M. Audi GDR rose a significant 11% driven by the rumors of possible merging, and ended the week at \$80.10 on a volume of 28,858 shares amounting to \$2.2M. All three of bank Byblos's stocks underwent trading this week. The bank's common shares rose 1.38% to \$2.20 with 181,123 shares at a value of \$393,212. Priority shares moved in the opposite direction declining 0.45% to \$2.21 registering trades in 229,694 stocks with a value of \$502,514. Lastly in Byblos shares, preferred shares stabilized at \$104.00 on a single trade of 100 shares at \$10,400. After being dormant for several months, BLC shares declined 6.25% to \$7.50 on a deal constituting 1,400 shares with a value of \$10,500. Concluding the banking sector, Bank of Beirut stocks were active all throughout this week, where common shares rose 2% to \$13.00 on a total of 16,000 stocks at \$208,000, while preferred shares 'C' stabilized at \$24.85 on a single trade of 2,000 shares valued at \$49,700. Consequently, the Bank's Preferred Shares Index remained stable at 103.42.

On the London Stock Exchange BLOM GDR stabilized at \$89.50, whereas Audi GDR increased 7.91% to \$77.80.

Real Estate

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
Solidere (A)	BSE	\$21.40	\$20.75	3.13%
Solidere (B)	BSE	\$21.35	\$20.74	2.94%
Solidere (GDR)	LSE	\$21.25	\$20.31	4.63%

Real Estate sector stocks Solidere 'A' and 'B' shares were among the gainers this week, where the former rose 3.13% to \$21.40 on a total of 127,188 shares valued at \$2.7M, while the latter increased 2.9% to \$21.35 on 49,300 stocks amounting to \$1M. On the London Stock Exchange, Solidere shares increased 4.63% to \$21.25

Manufacturing Sector

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
HOLCIM Liban	BSE	\$19.82	\$19.90	(0.40%)
Ciments Blancs (B)	BSE	\$1.90	\$1.90	0.00%
Ciments Blancs (N)	BSE	\$1.40	\$1.40	0.00%
Uniceramic (A)	BSE	\$0.45	\$0.45	0.00%
Uniceramic (C)	BSE	\$1.70	\$1.70	0.00%

Contrary to the banking and real estate sectors, the industrial sector realized a decline in its most active stock. Holcim, shares decreased 0.4% to end the week at \$19.82 on a dual trade of 2,526 stocks at \$50,048.

Funds

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
Beirut Global Income	BSE	\$102.80	\$102.00	0.78%
Beirut Preferred Fund	BSE	\$100.50	\$100.50	0.00%
Beirut Lira Fund	BSE	LP101,700	LP101,700	0.00%
Beirut Golden Income	BSE	LP102,000	LP102,000	0.00%
BLOM Cedars Balanced Fund Tranche "A"	-----	\$4969.32	\$4945.33	0.49%
BLOM Cedars Balanced Fund Tranche "B"	-----	\$4969.32	\$4945.33	0.49%

Three of Bank of Beirut's listed funds underwent trading this week. LP denominated Beirut Golden Income stabilized at LP102,000 on a single trade of 2,214 shares at LP225M. On the other hand, Dollar denominated Beirut Global income rose 0.78% to \$102.80 on a trade of 150 shares at \$15,420. Lastly, Beirut Preferred Fund stabilized this week at \$100.50 on a total of 1,830 shares at \$183,915.

Retail Sector

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
RYMCO	BSE	\$1.35	\$1.35	0.00%
ABC (New)	OTC	\$16.50	\$16.50	0.00%

No trading took place in the Retail Sector..

Tourism Sector

	Mkt	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
Casino Du Liban	OTC	\$280.00	\$280.00	0.00%
SGHL	OTC	\$6.50	\$6.50	0.00%

No trading took place in the Tourism Sector.

In conclusion, relative optimism in the political arena, coupled with improved investors' sentiment, lead to an improvement in the BLOM Stock Index (BSI) which settled at a higher range of 1440-1460 compared to 1430-1440 in preceding weeks. This week's enhanced activity was also driven by rumors of a possible merge in one of the leading banks in Lebanon. All in all, the Beirut Stock Exchange's revival this week indicates its readiness to shed its stagnation on the first glimmers of hope of political easing and financial consolidation.

Foreign Exchange Market

Lebanese ForEx Market

	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
LP / Dollar	1507.5	1507.5	0.00%
LP / Euro	2,349.59	2,321.40	1.21%
LP / Swiss Franc	1,439.17	1,477.51	(2.59%)
LP / Sterling	3,059.47	3,035.65	0.78%

International ForEx Market

	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change
Dollar / Euro	1.5626	1.5410	1.40%
Dollar / Sterling	2.0330	2.0138	0.95%
Swiss Franc/Dollar	1.0040	1.0215	(1.71%)
Yen / Dollar	100.16	102.18	(1.97%)
NEER Index*	89.01	89.69	(0.75%)

*Nominal Effective Exchange Rate; Base Year Jan 2006=100

The interbank market within local banks followed the same pattern of trading as that of its closing last week, on the demand side. This continued throughout the week where it fluctuated within a minimum bid of LP/\$1513.25 and an ask price of LP/\$1513.75 to LP/\$1514.00 with no central bank intervention. The underlying factor behind the demand on the dollar was due to the subscription of the newly placed \$875M Eurobond.

International foreign exchange markets witnessed a tumbling week. The dollar rose relatively on Tuesday to \$/€1.5281 after the Fed announced new measures to inject \$200 B into the financial system. However, this measure was short lived and the greenback resumed its slide and slipped to a new all time trough of \$/€1.5657 driven by the positive Euro zone industrial production data and the surprise fall in US retail sales. This was aggravated by the considerable US treasury deficit and the doubling of housing foreclosures that revived concerns about a deepening credit crisis and a U.S. recession. Locally, the dollar pegged Lebanese pound followed suit and fell against the euro to LP/€2349.59.

As a result, the Nominal Effective Exchange Rate (NEER) this week closed at 89.01 down 0.76% from last week's 89.69.

Money & Treasury Bills Markets

Money Market Rates

	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change bps.
Interbank Average†	3.50%	3.50%	0
BDL 45-day CD	4.40%	4.40%	0
BDL 60-day CD	4.89%	4.89%	0

Treasury Yields

	15/03/08	07/03/08	Change bps.
3-M TB yield	5.22%	5.22%	0
6-M TB yield	7.24%	7.24%	0
12-M TB yield	7.19%	7.19%	0
24-M TB coupon	8.50%	8.50%	0
36-M TB coupon	9.32%	9.32%	0
60-M TB coupon	11.5%	11.5%	0

Money markets resumed their stability and ample liquidity, keeping the overnight interbank rate at 3.5% . Overall (M3) liquidity increased to LP92,049B rising by LP345B on the back of higher currency in circulation and FC deposits and registering an increase of 13.6% y-o-y. No increased activity, however, in the CDs market where BDL sold LP3B worth of 60-days certificates of deposits only.

The March 6th TB auction resulted in LP86.13B (\$57M) deficit of purchase subscriptions over maturities, with nominal subscriptions amounting to LP31.22B (\$21M) in short term papers. Subscriptions in 6-M papers dominated the subscription accounting for 95.7% of total subscriptions while 3-M papers constituted the remaining 4.3% . This follows the previous trend that shows the banks' lack of preference for short term TBs due to their lower yields and interest margins. The weighted effective yield closed at 7.42% down 209 bps week-on-week. Concerning yields on outstanding TBs, there were no surprises as they remained unchanged across all maturities.

Eurobond Market

Eurobonds Index and Yield

	15/03/08	07/03/08	% Change
BLOM Bond Index †	97.47	97.47	0.00%
Bonds' Weighted Offer Yield	7.93%	7.86%	7bps

†7 April 2004 = 100; includes sovereign bonds listed on the Beirut Stock Exchange

Lebanese Government Eurobonds

Maturity-Coupon	Currency	15/03/08 Mid-Price	07/03/08 Mid-Price	Weekly Change%	Mid-Yield
2008, Jun - 7.375%	USD	99.925	99.975	(0.05%)	7.54%
2008, Aug - 10.125%	USD	100.850	101.000	(0.15%)	7.73%
2009, May - 7.250%	EUR	101.000	101.000	0.00%	6.31%
2009, Oct - 10.250%	USD	102.875	103.125	(0.24%)	8.23%
2009, Nov - 6.790%	USD	100.250	100.250	0.00%	8.46%
2009, Dec - 7.000%	USD	97.815	97.625	0.19%	8.37%
2010, Mar - 7.125%	USD	97.875	97.500	0.38%	8.32%
2011, Mar - 9.375%	LBP	99.250	98.250	1.02%	9.66%
2011, May - 7.875%	USD	98.000	98.250	(0.25%)	8.60%
2011, Aug - 7.500%	USD	96.940	97.375	(0.45%)	8.56%
2012, Apr - 5.875%	EUR	96.375	96.375	0.00%	6.93%
2012, Sep - 7.750%	USD	95.940	96.500	(0.58%)	8.87%
2013, Mar. - 9.125%	USD	100.315	100.00	0.31%	9.04%
2013, Jun - 8.625%	USD	98.500	99.250	(0.76%)	8.98%
2014, Apr - 7.375%	USD	92.500	93.375	(0.94%)	9.00%
2016, May -11.625%	USD	113.750	114.750	(0.87%)	9.19%
2016, Jan - 8.500%	USD	96.500	97.380	(0.90%)	9.13%
2021, Apr - 8.250%	USD	92.625	94.125	(1.59%)	9.23%

Lebanese Corporate Eurobonds

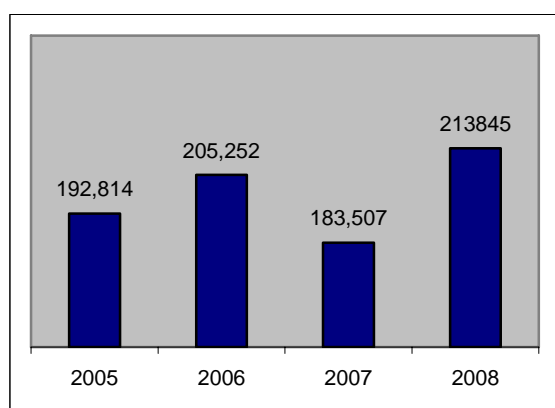
Issuer	Maturity-Coupon	15/03/08 Mid-Price	07/03/08 Mid-Price	Weekly Change	Mid-Yield %
Audi	2010, May -10.750%	106.500	106.500	0.00%	7.39%
Byblos	2012, Jun - 9.000%	99.750	99.75	0.00%	9.05%
Credit Libanais	2008, Sep - 6.875%	92.625	94.125	-1.59%	8.80%
BankMed	2010, July - 7.625%	98.000	98.000	0.00%	8.58%
BankMed	2012, Dec - 7.625%	96.315	96.315	0.00%	8.58%

Contrary to previous weeks, the Eurobond market was more active this week, as the long awaited Eurobond was finally released. As such, the market witnessed high local retail demand on the new issue, and low trading on other maturities, as the new bond is yielding a higher return at 9.25% than other older issues. Consequently, prices of Eurobonds declined this week resulting in a higher weighted offer yield which rose 7 bps to 7.93%. In addition, the average offer spread increased by 17bps to 576bps as a result of this higher offer yield but more so because of the decline in the benchmark US 10-yr treasury bond to 3.44%.

The sterile political scene with its remote hope of reaching a consensus, coupled with heightened risk in emerging markets, increased the credit default swaps (CDS) for Lebanese Eurobonds from 530-600bps last week to 600-650bps this week. The CDS spread is the premium paid by investors buying protection from default, and increases with the country's default risk. And Lebanon's high CDS premium is close to some emerging markets with comparable country risk such as Venezuela at 650-670bps, but noticeably higher than other emerging regional markets like Turkey at 280-283bps or even Pakistan at 460-500bps.

ECONOMIC STATISTICS & INDICATORS

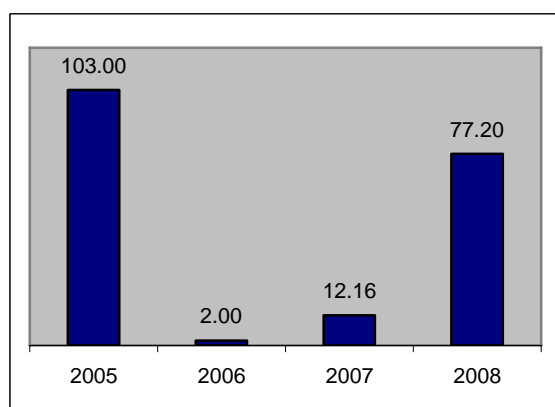
Passenger Activity in Jan.



Airport Passenger Activity Up 16.5% in January 2008

Total airport passengers in February increased 16.5% to 213,845 from the same period last year. This figure is close to the 2003 all time high of 224,253 and a 31% decline from this year's January 280,278. UAE, at 23%, continued to head the list of passenger activity alongside France 11%, Saudi Arabia 7.9% and Kuwait 7.7%. Though the four countries represent 50% of passenger movement, the number of aircraft traffic from these countries sum up to 40% of the total 2,943 airline activity. This is in line with January's 3,249 aircraft movement justifying the higher number of passengers. On the other hand, the difference between departures and arrivals shrank from 51,000 in January to 4,000 in February of this year. On the freight side, total cargo decreased 4% from January's 5100 tons.

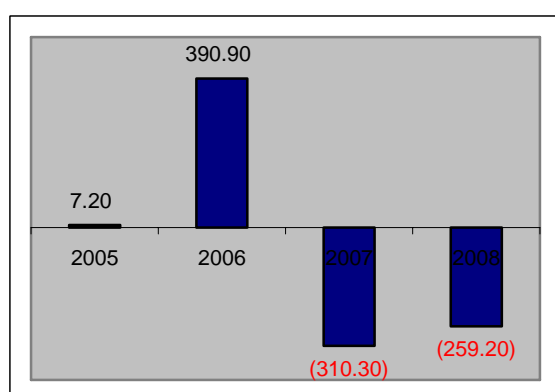
Budget Deficit in Jan. (\$M)



Budget Deficit Reaches LP116B in January 2008

According to the latest figures published by the Ministry of Finance, the government registered a LP116B budget deficit in January 2008, increasing a considerable 535% from last year. The deficit was a result of a 41% increase in total spending which reached LP1,144B. The government's increased expenditure was mainly driven by a rise in spending on Eléctricité Du Liban which increased by LP84B. In addition, the government's expenditure on debt servicing increased by LP104B as a result of a 28% increase in local debt servicing and a 58% rise in external debt servicing. The increase in the government's revenues came amid a rise in VAT receipts by LP39B and non-tax revenues by LP52B. Furthermore, treasury revenues rose by LP141B driven by LP148B grants received by the government at the beginning of the year. The primary surplus, however, was LP271B, increasing LP6B only from Jan. 2007.

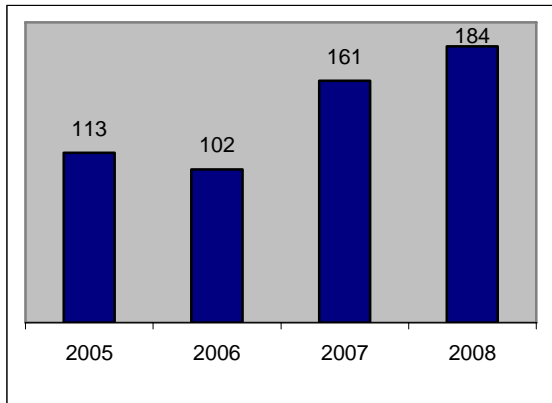
BoP in Jan. (\$M)



BoP Registers \$259.2M Deficit in January 2008

Lebanon's latest balance of payments registered a \$259.2M deficit compared to \$310.3M in January of last year. January's BoP came a result of a \$9.1M decrease in net foreign assets at BDL coupled with a \$250.1M decrease in banks' net foreign assets. This came as a result of a decline of \$102M in BDL's foreign assets due to \$78M reduction in financial sector deposits ; and a larger decline of \$369.5M in the foreign assets of commercial banks, mainly as a consequence of -\$236M decrease in non-resident bank deposits. This makes the latter's outflow in the capital and financial account responsible for most of the BoP deficit.

Industrial Exports in Jan. (\$M)



Industrial Exports Increased 14% in January 2008

Figures released by the customs directorate for January reveal that industrial exports increased 14% to \$184M from the same period last year mainly as a result of a weaker LP currency and domestic market. Base metals that include processed gold continued to top the bulk of exports with 24% share of total exports, increasing by \$10M from last January's \$31M. Machinery exports comprising mainly of electricity generating units maintained the same share of exports at 17% with little difference from last January. On the other hand, Switzerland continued to dominate the list of export destinations with 26% of exports (mainly processed jewellery), followed by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq (mainly electrical items) at 7%, 5%, and 4% respectively.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL NEWS

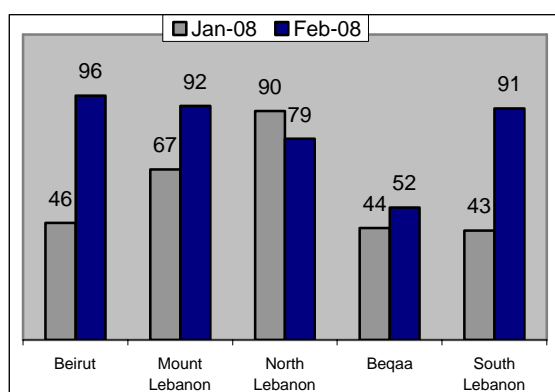
Beirut Facts

Average land price (sq m)	\$5,000
Commercial yield	9%
Residential yield	5%
Occupancy rate	97%

Political Tension Cools Commercial Property but Heats up its Residential Side

Political tension and its resulting slowdown in the economy has flattened the demand for commercial real estate and reduced the shortages in this sub-sector, except in the Beirut Central District where rental values are estimated to have increased by 17% last year. Not so for residential property, however, that is experiencing a renewed demand. In Beirut, this demand comes mostly from Lebanese expatriates – who are more than 60,000 strong in the Gulf alone – and outweighs the fall in demand from foreign (largely Arab) buyers. But whereas Arab demand would have concentrated on high-end residentials, this new demand is more “middle class” in nature and concentrates on medium-size residentials (100 sq m) that sell for \$200,000 or less, and that has witnessed a rise in prices of more than 30%. Banks have also been accommodating this higher demand, granting more mortgages to feed it, with less than 10% in rejections.

Consumer Confidence Index by Caza



February Consumer Confidence Index Up 23 Points

The consumer confidence index (CCI) prepared by Ara'a Research, increased to 81 in February after falling to 58 last month. The CCI index comprises three current indicators: economic, income and security; in addition to two expected indices: economic and income. A durable goods index is also part of the overall CCI. Given the relative lull in the security situation, all current indices increased by an average of 21 points, whereas the expected indexes increased by an average of 19 points. Notably, the durable goods index increased to 100 points from January's 40

Selected Top Companies Highlights

	Rank	MC(\$B)
Zain Telecom - Kuwait	5	23.8
Kingdom HC – KSA	12	19.4
Arab Bank- Jordan	18	14.6

Solidere Among Largest 100 Companies in the Arab World

The latest data on Arab listed companies show that only Solidere among Lebanese companies is in the top 100 in terms of market capitalization (MC). Solidere's rank was 85 at a MC of \$3.5 B, and whose stock price fluctuated with the economic/political fortunes of Lebanon rising to \$26 in January 2006 but falling to about \$ 21 currently. The 100 companies were dominated by 42 financial firms whose stock movements largely determine the Arab overall index, but such dominance points to the paucity of big Arab fully- private non-financial firms that could rely on financing from equity markets. Next came telecommunications and real estate at 14 and 13 firms respectively. Saudi Arabia took the first 3 rankings starting with SABIC, Al-Rajhi Bank, and Saudi Telecom at \$110.8 B, \$38.7 B, and \$38 B respectively. Petrochemical and telecommunications industries are expected to be the best performers and best buys in the coming future

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENTS

Solidere H1-07 Financial Highlights (\$M)

(\$M)	H1-07	2006
Total Assets	2,411	2,137
Investment in joint ventures & subsidiaries	251.40	31.74
Bank Overdrafts & short term facilities	228.31	48.36
Net income for the period	60.21	77.00

Solidere Total Assets Reach \$2.4B in Mid-2007

The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District, Solidere published its unaudited financial statements for the first half of 2007. The company's balance sheet revealed a 13 % rise in total assets as compared to December 2006 to reach \$2.4B. The rise in total assets was mainly driven by the significant increase in the company's investment in joint ventures and subsidiaries which totaled \$251M by Mid-2007 as compared to \$32M in December 2006. This could be explained by the company's ongoing regional expansion, where it established Solidere International with a prepaid capital of \$700M. In addition, the company has adopted several regional projects such as the \$4B joint work with Egypt's Sixth of October Investment and Development (SODIC). As a result of this regional expansion, the company witnessed a considerable increase of 372% in its Bank overdrafts and short term facilities to reach \$228M. Lastly, Solidere's income statement revealed a decrease of \$67M in its revenues from land and real estate sales due to the downturn in the real estate sector spurred by the political instability in the country.

Intercontinental Financial Highlights (\$M)

(\$M)	2007	2006
Assets	1,7991	1,611
Deposits	1,601	1,422
Equity	114	99
Net Profits	21	17

Intercontinental Bank Increases Capital by \$11.6M

As per the extraordinary shareholders meeting, Intercontinental bank has increased its capital from \$44M to \$55M. The capital increase came through the issuing of 2,347,360 nominal shares valued at \$5 each. Existing shareholders are entitled to buy the new stocks according to their existing stock holding ratio. As of the 05 March, the total number of shares increased to 10,360,000 which are not listed on regular financial markets

Funds Annual Returns (%)

(%)	2007	2006	2005
Fund I	25	24	23
Fund II	49	47	34

Al-Mustathmer Launches Two Commodity Funds

"Al-Mustathmer", a Lebanese financial institution, launched two investment funds : Commodities Fund 1 and 2. Commodities Fund I is specialized in the trading of oil & its derivatives in foreign markets, while Fund II specializes in trades in metal. These funds will provide an annual return of 18% which is higher than the return given by the existing international financial indexes. Both funds are capitalized at \$ 20 M each that can be increased to reach \$ 200 M.

FOCUS IN BRIEF

Lebanese Unemployment and its Characteristics

Labor Force Distribution

	Beirut	Mount Leb	North	Bekaa	South	Nabatieh	Total Individuals	%
Employed	145,666	488,844	194,047	120,887	102,604	56,080	1,108,128	92.1
Unemployed	16,185	45,512	10,211	7,026	9,523	5,985	94,442	7.9
Labor Force	161,851	534,356	204,258	127,913	112,127	62,065	1,202,570	100

Source : Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) 2004

The unemployment rate in Lebanon has been a controversial topic in the past couple of months where the minimum wage negotiations have resurfaced the subject. The rate of the unemployed in Lebanon has been widely quoted from a low of 7.9% according to the Central Administration of Statistics to 25% as recently cited by the Labor Unionists. Still other international agencies put the figure between 15-20%. Whatever the rate of the unemployed, a closer look at the demographic figures reveal a wealth of information about the Lebanese socio-economic structure that is unique in itself.

The only comprehensive data relating to unemployment was compiled by the CAS under the 'Living Conditions National Survey' carried out in 2004. Total unemployment is defined as the percentage of the total unemployed compared to the total labor force that is equal to those working and seeking work. This puts the figure of the unemployed at 94,442 persons compared to a total of 1,108,128 of employed people. This said, and in the absence of a Lebanese census bureau that continuously monitors and updates the status of the population, it is rather feeble to consider a survey at a specific point in time as a reference for employment in Lebanon now. The survey highlights that a mere 0.2% of the unemployed filed for job searches through the national employment office in contrast to 72% who were seeking jobs through acquaintances. This reveals the inefficiency of public agencies with respect to regularizing the interests of the labor force. Moreover, Lebanon continuously witnesses political setbacks that adversely affect the movement of labor across its borders. For example, since the survey in 2004, Lebanon experienced two major incidences, the late prime Minister Hariri's assassination and the July war of 2006 whose consequences are still reverberating at the socio economic level. For example, the difference in the number of departures/arrivals in the first two months of this year increased to 55,631 compared to 18,503 last year reflecting a movement of the local labor force to Arab countries and beyond.

With the above reservations notwithstanding, in terms of age and education distribution of the unemployed, it is interesting to note that the most active group of the labor force aged 20-34 accounted for 58% of the unemployed, 39% of whom are educated. On the sectoral distribution of the work force, 60% are involved in the trade and services sector, whereas 23% are active in industry and agriculture. Of the 198,000 companies surveyed, almost 50% were located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The number of companies with less than 5 employees constituted the bulk of the total at 88%, while those with 6 or more employees accounted 12% of total establishments. This highlights that most firms fall under the small enterprises bracket, which deem them more vulnerable to closure from political and economic shake-ups. This in turn reinforces the displacement and cross border movement of the labor force when subjected to unforeseen turmoils such as war or economic woes. Thus, it becomes even more challenging to accurately monitor the unemployment rate.

As for the cazas with the highest unemployment rate, Beirut and Nabatieh registered 10% and 9.6% respectively followed by Mount and South Lebanon at 8.5% each. Whereas the percentage of female unemployed was lower in Beirut at 9% compared to 11% for males, it was the reverse in the second most unemployed casa where female unemployment stood at 14% compared to 9% for males. Also, the unemployed with a 12-months time interval spent looking for jobs registered the highest percentage at 23%.

In short, employment in Lebanon is far from being a perfect exercise in compiling statistics or conducting field surveys. It involves the careful monitoring of workforce movement across borders in light of the constant political setbacks that the Lebanese population has been subjected to. In addition, Lebanon's commitment to international agreements and organizations, puts on the Lebanese government the added need to pursue the modernization of existing government bodies that have a direct bearing on the well being of the labor force –especially the unemployed–by providing the required support in terms of funding and human resources



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