

## Greece rejects Moody's 'junk' status rat

Greece's finance ministry rejected a decision by Moody's rating agency to slash the country's sovereign rating to "junk" status.

"This downgrading in no way reflects the progress we have made in the last few months, nor the opportunities opened by our budgetary stabilisation and the improvement of our country's competitiveness," it said in a statement.

It said its budgetary measures "showed very clearly" that Greece was meeting the requirements of the EU and IMF, which have together provided Athens with a 110 billion euro (\$A157.06 billion) bailout.

Moody's said it had dropped its rating for Greece by four notches from A3 to Ba1 on concerns about how Athens can repay its debts.

"This uncertainty represents a risk that leads Moody's to believe that Greece's creditworthiness is now consistent with a Ba1 rating, a rating which incorporates a greater, albeit, low risk of default," Moody's said.

The European Union's top economic commissioner Olli Rehn has criticised US-based rating agency Moody's for slashing its sovereign debt rating for Greece to 'junk' status.

Rehn has told a debate in the European parliament .. the decision to cut Greece's rating is surprising and unfortunate at a time when EU and IMF auditors are taking a hard look at the country's attempts to slash its debt.

The agency said considerable uncertainty about Greek plans .. even with the help of an EU-IMF bailout package to reduce its huge debt and balance its finances .. justified the ratings cut by four notches from A3 to Ba1.

AFP

## China eyeing major Greek investments, says report

China plans to invest billions of euros in shipping, logistics and airport projects in Greece, as the European nation battles to slash its massive debt, a report said yesterday.

The investment deals are due to be signed on Tuesday during a visit to Athens by Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Dejiang, the Financial Times reported, citing an unnamed Greek government official.

"These concern maritime affairs, telecoms and a project to renovate a landmark tower building in Athens' port of Piraeus," the official was quoted as saying.

Other deals including shipbuilding agreements worth 500 million euros (\$A711.69 million) will also be signed, the report said.

Athens is seeking to attract investment from countries with massive sovereign wealth funds - such as China - in an effort to stimulate economic growth in its debt-laden economy. Greece's abundant port facilities, the quality of its world-leading merchant fleet and its strategic location as a gateway into the Balkans and Europe have drawn interest from Chinese global commercial giant Cosco.

The Chinese company last year signed with Greece a 35-year concession to expand the two main container terminals at the main Greek port of Piraeus for a guaranteed premium of 3.4 billion euros (\$A4.84 billion).

"Cosco has a major plan to build the port of Piraeus into the greatest container hub in the Eastern Mediterranean area, and we will create a logistics centre in Piraeus," Cosco chief executive Wei Jiafu told reporters last month.

Greek transport minister Dimitris Reppas said in May that Chinese companies could be interested in involvement in the privatisation of Greece's heavily indebted railway OSE. The European Union and the International Monetary Fund have given Greece a 110 billion (\$A156.57 billion) bailout package over three years to tackle the fiscal crisis, which has spilled over into euro-zone countries such as Spain and Portugal.

AFP

## Australia won't become Greece with tax: Rudd



Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says his government's proposed mining tax will ensure Australia doesn't go the way of debt-laden Greece.

Labor wants to implement a 40 per cent tax on the so-called super profits of mining companies to pay for business tax cuts, new infrastructure and superannuation changes. But it is a move that is hurting Mr Rudd in the polls.

A Newpoll survey of marginal seats in Western Australia and Queensland, commissioned by the mining industry and published in *The Australian* newspaper, showed 48 per cent of respondents were against the tax and 28 per cent supported it.

Despite the negative numbers, Mr Rudd is still refusing to budge on the 40 per cent tax rate.

"We believe we've got the overall de-

sign of this tax right, we've said we've got the rate right," he told ABC Radio.

"We've said we would consult with industry on the question of detail, on implementation, and generous transition arrangements."

Mr Rudd said the economy wouldn't grow without reform, and that the government was legislating to stop Australia from going the same way as financially troubled Greece.

"Right now, people look at Greece and they look at Europe and they see huge levels of sovereign indebtedness," he said.

"In Australia, one of the ways in which we've been able to keep the economy strong is by having this large pool of national savings. That will be added to by the increase in superannuation for working families."

## Glacier man died of natural causes

A preliminary post-mortem report has found an Australian man died of natural causes on the Franz Josef Glacier in New Zealand.

A coronial investigation is under way to determine how John Parisi, 37, died after he slipped while walking along the bottom of a crevasse as part of a tour group on Saturday.

It is unclear whether the NSW man fell and then suffered a heart attack or vice versa.

A preliminary post-mortem examination found Mr Parisi died of natural causes, Constable William Parker of Franz Josef police said yesterday.

However, he could not say whether this meant Mr Parisi died because of a medical condition.

Mr Parisi was in a group of 11 hikers walking along the Lower Defiance corridor on Saturday when he slipped and fell sideways into a narrow opening, Const Parker said.

"It took quite a bit of work to get him out," he told AAP.

Guides administered CPR while trying to extract him and he was eventually winched out and taken by helicopter to the township of Franz Joseph on the South Island's west coast. He could not be revived, however.

John Thorburn, chief executive of Ngai Tahu Tourism, which owns the glacier guide company, said the company had launched an investigation.

"We are still pretty unclear as to what

actually caused the gentleman's death and I guess that will come out in the course of the investigation," he said.

The company was focusing on looking after its staff and customers who witnessed the accident, a spokeswoman said yesterday. Tours of the glacier resumed on Monday, having been suspended after the incident on Saturday.

Mr Parisi was born in Australia but lived in Greece for 20 years and had no other immediate family living in Australia, The Sydney Morning Herald reports.

His cousin, Tina Vasilakis, told the paper Mr Parisi had undergone blood tests before he left Australia for a holiday.

"He was healthy, he was happy," she said. "He was fine."

A relative is believed to be travelling from Greece to bring his body back there. Ms Vasilakis said Mr Parisi worked for pharmaceutical company Roche until earlier this year when he was made redundant.

He had been planning to move to Switzerland to look for work, she told the paper. Mr Parisi's death is the third Australian fatality on the glacier in 18 months.

In early 2009, Melbourne brothers Akshay Miranda, 22, and Ashish Miranda, 24 were crushed to death by hundreds of tonnes of ice when they ignored warning signs and walked beyond a safety barrier.