Real Economy Year Book 2010

Description: This year's edition of the Real Economy Year Book, which has been compiled by Creamer Media's Research Unit, is published at a time when visibility of the future is poor to say the least. The South African economy appears to be on the mend, but the scars from the 'great recession' of 2008 and 2009 have not fully healed, while real threats to overall economic health and wellbeing remain. The news flow from the rest of the world is not overwhelmingly positive, despite the fact that most countries have also returned to a semblance of growth.

Serious questions are being asked about the future for the eurozone, with the debt crisis in Greece having arguably exposed key weaknesses in the monetary union. Across the world, concern is mounting over what is being dubbed as “the sovereign debt crises”; with the so-called PIIGGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Great Britain and Spain) having became the poster children for government indebtedness more generally.

There is also the not insignificant issue of China's interest-rate and currency policies, which some believe could precipitate the next big “bubble”, unless rebalancing steps are taken. Then, there is the US, where the recovery, by all accounts, remains fragile.

What does this all mean for South Africa?

For one, it should be acknowledged that, while there is no debt crisis in South Africa, the country is unlikely to be unaffected by the fallout from the crises being experienced elsewhere in the world. If nothing else, the last couple of years demonstrated just how closely aligned South Africa's fortunes (and misfortunes) are to those of the global economy – our macroeconomic probity, notwithstanding.

So, if the world 'double dips', South Africa is quite likely to follow, with all the attendant economic and social ills that entails, especially in the area of employment security.

Therefore, as South Africans, we have to concentrate on those instruments that remain under our control, such as safeguarding democracy and the rule of law, pursuing prudent fiscal and monetary management, improving education and productivity, building world-class economic and social infrastructure and creating strong public and private institutions.

Another key lever, in my view, is ongoing, fact-rich and balanced communication. Such communication makes for far better visibility of both the threats and the opportunities being presented. This publication is just one more attempt by Creamer Media to keep the channels of communications open in South Africa's real economy. I trust you will find the news, information and insight valuable and I hope it goes part of the way to improving visibility, despite the uncertainties.

Contents:

Automotive
South Africa's automotive industry is slowly recovering in the wake of the global economic crisis, and although the country's reputation as a reliable manufacturer and supplier of high-quality vehicles and components remains intact, challenges abound.

Construction
South Africa's construction industry has the potential to serve as an important driver of economic growth in the country, owing to its ability to develop the infrastructure necessary for economic activity.

Electricity
South Africa's electricity supply-demand
balance remains tight, with indications that demand could return to 2007 levels during the course of 2010. Interventions are necessary if the country is to avoid loadshedding on a significant scale, in the 2011/12 period.

Liquid Fuels
Prior to 1954, all fuel consumed in South Africa was imported in refined form. Today South Africa hosts four crude oil refineries and two synthetic fuels plants.

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