

HD Deals of the day- Mergers and acquisitions
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(Adds Alsea, UniCredit, Qatar Airways, Staples, Pfizer, Endurance Specialty, Ascometal, updates Alstom)

May 5 (Reuters) - The following bids, mergers, acquisitions and disposals were reported by 2000 GMT on Monday:

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** Endurance Specialty Holdings Ltd is considering increasing its offer to acquire rival reinsurer Aspen Insurance Holdings Ltd to around \$50 per share, or roughly \$3.26 **billion**, people familiar with the matter said.

** Mexican state-run **oil company** Pemex has hired Credit Agricole to sell its **stake** of just over 9 percent in Spanish **oil** major Repsol, Spanish online newspaper El Confidencial reported, citing financial sources. The **stake**'s market value is worth about 2.3 **billion** euros (\$3.19 **billion**), according to Reuters' calculation.

** Australia's Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd agreed to **buy** state-owned Rural Finance Corp for A\$1.78 **billion** (\$1.65 **billion**) in an **acquisition** that would almost quadruple its loans to farmers.

** **Chinese** steel giant Baosteel Resources and Australian rail **company** Aurizon Holdings Ltd launched a \$1 **billion** takeover bid for Australian explorer Aquila Resources Ltd in a move that could help break the grip of mega **iron ore** exporters Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton .

** Sterigenics, a sterilization services provider owned by private **equity firm** GTCR LLC, raised its buyout offer for Nordion Inc to \$758 **million** from \$727 **million** on Monday, after the Canadian medical isotope supplier received a rival bid from an unnamed buyer.

** Etisalat, which is set to **buy** a majority **stake** in Maroc Telecom, has agreed to sell its West African business to the Moroccan **firm** for \$650 **million** to tap its expertise in that region.

** Mexican restaurant operator Alsea said on Monday it received regulatory approval to **purchase** retailer Walmex's Vips restaurant chain, with the deal set to be finalized in the coming days. Alsea, which runs Domino's Pizza, Starbucks and Burger King franchises in Mexico, agreed to **buy** Walmex's 361 restaurants in September for 8.2 **billion** pesos (\$630.85 **million**).

** Israeli businessman Zadik Bino is in talks with three groups to sell his controlling **stake** in Paz **Oil**, Israel's largest distributor of refined **oil** products, for 2 **billion** shekels (\$579 **million**), TheMarker financial news website said on Sunday.

** Hon Hai Precision Industry Co Ltd, which makes iPhones for Apple Inc, is in talks to **buy** 22 percent of compatriot mobile network provider Asia Pacific Telecom Co Ltd , local media reported citing unidentified sources. The deal will be worth T\$11 **billion** to T\$14 **billion** (\$464.48 **million**), the **Commercial** Times reported.

** General Electric Co on Monday made tender offers to **buy** shares worth up to \$389 **million** in two of Alstom SA's India units to comply with local rules, following its \$16.9 **billion** bid to **buy** the French **group's** **energy** unit.

Also, the French government cannot give its backing to General Electric's bid for Alstom's **energy** assets in its current form, the industry ministry said in a letter to GE CEO Jeff Immelt on Monday.

** An investor consortium led by Dutch pension fund asset manager APG Asset Management N.V. and investment **firm** The Xander **Group** have formed a \$300 **million** fund to **buy** leased office assets in India, the companies said.

** BlackBerry Ltd disclosed that U.S. real **estate** investment **company** Spear Street Capital is buying the majority of the embattled technology **firm**'s Canadian real **estate** holdings for C\$305 **million** (\$278.09 **million**).

** Australian gas **firm** WestSide Corp Ltd on Monday rejected as undervalued a takeover offer from **China**'s diversified **energy company** Landbridge **Group** Co Ltd that valued the **company** at A\$177.6 **million** (\$164.64 **million**).

** Staples Inc said on Monday it will pay roughly C\$74 **million** (\$67.5 **million**) for Canada's PNI Digital Media, giving it control of the software maker that powers in-store kiosks to print photographs, calendars and wedding invitations.

** A **group** of French industrialists and investors said on Monday it planned to make a bid of at least 40 **million** euros (\$56 **million**) for the assets of bankrupt French speciality steel maker Ascometal.

** Unlisted French retailer Auchan will **buy** nearly half the Paris stores that rival Casino has to sell in order to win regulatory clearance to take full control of Monoprix, a source close to the matter said on Monday.

** Alitalia's CEO Gabriele Del Torchio will present his counterpart at Etihad with a proposal aimed at reaching a deal for an investment by the Gulf-based airline in the struggling Italian carrier, one of Alitalia's top shareholders said on Monday.

** Dubai Investments said it plans to sell off some assets. "We are edging towards completion of a divestment **transaction** which will significantly contribute to the **group**'s profitability," said Chief Executive Khalid Bin Kalban, without giving further details.

** German engineering **firm** Siemens AG is close to finalizing an agreement to sell its logistics and airports solutions business to a **group** led by **billionaire** investor Wilbur Ross, Bloomberg reported on Sunday, quoting people familiar with the talks.

** German aircraft seating maker Recaro is looking at buying assets from **B/E Aerospace** after the U.S. **company** announced a surprise review that could **lead** to a shake-up of the \$3 **billion** cabins industry.

** French utility GDF Suez and Suez Environnement on Sunday denied a report that Spanish **group** La Caixa would take a **stake** in the environmental services **firm**, replacing **lead** shareholder GDF Suez.

** Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways on Sunday said its strategy of buying stakes in European airlines was bringing fresh competition to the region, despite close scrutiny by regulators over whether its investments comply with European ownership rules.

** UniCredit is moving forward on the planned **sale** of its debt collection unit, as part of a broader effort by Italy's biggest bank by assets to squeeze more money out of its large soured-loans portfolio.

** Qatar's sovereign wealth fund has bought the stakes in its national airline owned by a former prime minister and other shareholders, making Qatar Airways a fully government-owned entity, the carrier's chief executive said on Monday.

** Pfizer Inc's top officials said on Monday they were weighing all strategies, including potential hostile maneuvers, in the **company**'s effort to complete its intended takeover of British drugmaker AstraZeneca Plc. (\$1 = 0.7212 Euros) (\$1 = 1.0795 Australian Dollars) (\$1 = 30.1410 Taiwan Dollars) (\$1 = 3.4560 Israeli Shekels) (\$1 = 1.0967 Canadian Dollars) (Compiled by Avik Das and Ankit Ajmera in Bangalore)

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