

NATIONAL HELLENIC



FREE PRESS



GREEK AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

VOL. 26

NO. 310

CHICAGO, IL.

AUGUST, 2010

GREECE, SUMMER 2010



Mount climbing is a very healthy but strenuous hobby that requires tremendous physical strength, stamina and mental alertness. However, the rewards one enjoys, when reaching the mountain top are worthy of the risks. In picture above the mountain range of HELMOS

Agreement on defense matters

Greek and Israeli leaders agree to resume air force exercise and seek further military cooperation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rounded off his trip to Greece recently with a visit to the Saronic Gulf island of Poros,



where he held further talks with Greek officials aimed at seeking cooperation between the two countries, particularly on defense issues

Prime Minister George Papandreou accompanied Netanyahu to Poros. The pair sat down for talks there with Defense Minister Evangelos Venizelos, Deputy Defense Minister Panos Beglitis and Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas.

One of the key items on the agenda was the strengthening of cooperation between Greece and Israel on military issues. It was agreed that the joint air force exercise, Minoas, which was canceled when Israeli commandos boarded ships carrying aid to Gaza in June, should be completed this October. The two sides also agreed that a visit to Greece by the Israeli air force chief, also postponed for the same reason, should now go ahead.

Israel has limited air space and is keen to reach agreements with other countries to carry out joint exercises. For many years, Turkey had

obliged but relations between Ankara and Jerusalem have deteriorated this year.

It was also agreed yesterday that Venizelos should soon visit Israel so the two countries can discuss other areas of military cooperation.

Greek diplomatic sources denied suggestions that Athens was seeking to capitalize on the current thorny relations between Israel and Turkey, insisting that there is a long-term strategy to fostering closer ties with Jerusalem. They also stressed that they do not see a warmer relationship with Israel as signi-

fying a cooling of ties with Turkey, which have also been rekindled recently, or with the Arab countries with which Greece has traditionally had close ties.

The same sources also underlined that Greece is not looking to punch above its weight in the region and is well aware of the limited role that it can play in something like the Middle East peace process, even though Papandreou has offered to help bridge the divide between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Netanyahu also met with New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras, who described the conversation between the two men as "very useful." The Communist Party accused the government of "absolving the Israeli leadership of guilt in the face of the Palestinian people." The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) said that Greece's policy was in line with the "general schemes" of the USA and aided "an isolated Israel."

The Muslims in the Middle

By WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S eloquent endorsement on Friday of a planned Islamic cultural center near the World Trade Center, followed by his apparent retreat the next day, was just one of many paradoxes at the heart of the increasingly impassioned controversy.

We have seen the Anti-Defamation League, an organization dedicated to ending "unjust and unfair discrimination," seek to discriminate against American Muslims. We have seen Newt Gingrich depict the organization behind the center — the Cordoba Initiative, which is dedicated to "improving Muslim-West relations" and interfaith dialogue — as a "deliberately insulting" and triumphalist force attempting to build a monument to Muslim victory near the site of the twin towers

Most laughably, we have seen politicians like Rick Lazio, a Republican candidate for New York governor, question whether Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, the principal figure behind the project, might have links to "radical organizations."

The problem with such claims goes far beyond the fate of a mosque in downtown Manhattan. They show a dangerously inadequate understanding of the many divisions, complexities and nuances within the Islamic world — a failure that hugely hampers Western efforts to fight violent Islamic extremism and to reconcile Americans with peaceful adherents of the world's second-largest religion.

Most of us are perfectly capable of making distinctions within the Christian world. The fact that someone is a Boston Roman Catholic doesn't mean he's in league with Irish Republican Army bomb makers, just as not all Orthodox Christians have ties to Serbian war criminals or Southern Baptists to the murderers of abortion doctors.

Yet many of our leaders have a tendency to see the Islamic world as a single, terrifying monolith. Had the George W. Bush administration been more aware of the irreconcilable differences between the Salafist jihadists of Al Qaeda and the secular Baathists of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the United States might never have blundered into a disastrous war, and instead kept its focus on rebuilding post-Taliban Afghanistan while the hearts and minds of the

Afghans were still open to persuasion.

Feisal Abdul Rauf of the Cordoba Initiative is one of America's leading thinkers of Sufism, the mystical form of Islam, which in terms of goals and outlook couldn't be farther from the violent Wahhabism of the jihadists. His videos and sermons preach love, the remembrance of God (or "zikr") and reconciliation. His slightly New Agey rhetoric makes him sound, for better or worse, like a Muslim Deepak Chopra. But in the eyes of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, he is an infidel-loving, grave-worshipping apostate; they no doubt regard him as a legitimate target for assassination.

For such moderate, pluralistic Sufi imams are the front line against the most violent forms of Islam. In the most radical parts of the Muslim world, Sufi leaders risk their lives for their tolerant beliefs, every bit as bravely as American troops on the ground in Baghdad and Kabul do. Sufism is the most pluralistic incarnation of Islam — accessible to the learned and the ignorant, the faithful and nonbelievers — and is thus a uniquely valuable bridge between East and West.

The great Sufi saints like the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi held that all existence and all religions were one, all manifestations of the same divine reality. What was important was not the empty ritual of the mosque, church, synagogue or temple, but the striving to understand that divinity can best be reached through the gateway of the human heart: that we all can find paradise within us, if we know where to look. In some ways Sufism, with its emphasis on love rather than judgment, represents the New Testament of Islam.

While the West remains blind to the divisions and distinctions within Islam, the challenge posed by the Sufi vision of the faith is not lost on the extremists. This was shown most violently on July 2, when the Pakistani Taliban organized a double-suicide bombing of the Data Darbar, the largest Sufi shrine in Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city. The attack took place on a Thursday night, when the shrine was at its busiest; 42 people were killed and 175 were injured.



This state's long, troubled, expensive episode with Rod R. Blagojevich, the former governor, appears far from over. But as prosecutors prepare to retry Mr. Blagojevich on the most serious corruption charges against him — charges that a federal jury found itself deadlocked over on Tuesday — one thing does seem to have come and gone: the impetus to cleanse Illinois's long-derided political system.

NATIONAL HELLENIC FREE PRESS

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ENTERTAINMENT LIVE

By Denise Rekoumis

Entertainment News

Comic and "Chelsea Lately" host Chelsea Handler will host the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards, following in the footsteps of funnyman Russell Brand (who hosted event for the past two years), *Access Hollywood* has confirmed.



"This has been a huge year for hip-hop and rap, and it is well-known that I have the closest ties with these communities - musically and sexually," said Chelsea Handler in statement released to *Access*. "I am to rap and hippity-hop, what Warren Buffet is to finance, minus the sex."

Also, a source close to Steven Tyler says the Aerosmith frontman told the source he will be a judge on Fox's "American Idol" next season.

While an official announcement about Tyler has yet to come from Fox and the producers of the top-rated show, the source told The Associated Press on Wednesday, "there is no reason to refute" Tyler's account. The source spoke only on the condition of anonymity because the source was not authorized to comment publicly on the matter.

The "Idol" judging panel has been in flux with the departure of mainstay Simon Cowell, as well as Ellen DeGeneres' recent announcement that she would not return for a second season.

Celebrity Legal News

The owner of a Beverly Hills beauty salon was charged with fraud Wednesday for using credit card information from clients such as Liv Tyler to ring up hundreds of thousands of dollars in bogus charges, authorities said.

Maria Gabriella Perez, 51, was arrested by Secret Service agents at her business, Chez Gabriela Studio. She faces two counts of fraud that carries a maximum prison sentence of 25 years if she is convicted.

Perez was expected to appear in federal court Thursday. Her attorney, Jerod Gunsberg, said his client will be exonerated of all the charges.

Perez's website says her celebrity clientele includes Jennifer Aniston, Halle Berry and Cher. An affidavit said actress Liv Tyler had about \$214,000 in bad charges from Perez's studio to two credit cards over a five-month period last year.

Another alleged victim was jewelry designer Loree Rodkin, whose attorney told investigators that about \$68,000 had been charged to her credit card from Perez's studio without her authorization. Perez offered \$25,000 worth of products in exchange for the charges, but Rodkin refused, the affidavit said.

Also, Mel Gibson's ex-girlfriend smiled as she walked in and out of a closed court session Wednesday involving custody issues with their young daughter, but the Russian singer didn't reveal how the case was going.

Gibson did not appear at the hearing, which was closed to the public by law.

Deputies flanked Oksana Grigorieva in the courthouse hallways as she passed a handful of reporters anxious for news about the bitter legal fight.

A summary posted outside the courtroom indicated attorneys would argue a motion on whether to seize the passport of the 9-month-old daughter.

It was the first time Gibson, 54, or Grigorieva, 40, appeared in court regarding the case. Attorneys for both declined comment after the daylong hearing.

The ex-couple reached a confidential custody agreement in May, but repeated hearings have been held since the custody case was filed later.

The proceedings have been closely monitored by courthouse officials and deputies. A paparazzo and a reporter for celebrity website RadarOnline.com were escorted from the building Wednesday after shooting photos in the hallway, a violation of courthouse rules.

And, attorneys in the probation case for troubled actress Lindsay Lohan met on Wednesday with a new presiding judge, who set a status hearing for August 25, a court official said.

No details about the actress's stint in a court-ordered drug and alcohol rehabilitation were disclosed after the closed-door proceeding. A court spokesman confirmed the new hearing date, and said Lohan is not expected to be present.

Attorney Shawn Chapman Holley, who represents Lohan, told TV reporters outside a Beverly Hills courthouse that no decision had yet been made on when the "Mean Girls" actress might be released from rehab.

Lohan, 24, spent 13 days behind bars last month after a judge ruled that she had violated her probation on charges stemming from a 2007 drunken driving arrest. After her release, she was immediately sent to rehab to serve 90 days of inpatient counseling, but speculation has run high that she will be released early.

Chicago News

A male pedestrian has been struck and killed by a Metra train on the Northwest Side near Elmwood Park.

North Central Service train No. 104 coming from Antioch to Union Station struck the person near Neva and Grand avenues, according to Metra spokesman Tom Miller. It had been expected to arrive downtown at 7:47 a.m., he said. The accident happened around 7:30 a.m.

The accident happened just east of Elmwood Park in Chicago's Galewood neighborhood, just west of Metra's Mont Clare station. A fire department spokesman said the person struck was a man. It was the second train fatality in two days.

And, Rod Blagojevich brought his two children to court with him during closing arguments of his corruption trial — a move that didn't impress at least one juror.

Cynthia Parker, 60, of Gurnee, said bringing daughters Amy, 14, and Annie, 7, to the federal courthouse was simply "a show."

"I wouldn't want my child to be exposed to that," said Parker, a retired Illinois Department of Employment Security worker. "... The whole world is going after the father."

Parker said she was one of the 11 jurors who voted to convict Blagojevich on charges he tried to sell the U.S. Senate seat appointment.

She also described Blagojevich defense attorney Sam Adam Jr. as "a showman" but said his theatrical style was not to her taste and that she wouldn't hire him if she was in trouble with the law.

Finally, Police are seeking the occupants of a dark-colored sport-utility vehicle in the early morning shooting death of a 27-year-old man in the Calumet Heights neighborhood on the Far South Side.

The man was talking with his girlfriend in the 9100 block of South Burley when the SUV drove past and one of its occupants opened fire, striking the victim at least once in the abdomen, police said.

The man was transported to Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn where he was pronounced dead, according to police.

The woman was not hurt and no one was in custody for the attack.

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Dark chocolate can be good for the heart, study says

Dark chocolate Higher cocoa content in the chocolate is associated with greater heart benefits

Older women who eat dark chocolate once or twice a week could be lowering their risk of heart failure, says a US study.

It found those eating chocolate once or twice a week cut the risk of developing heart failure by a third, but those eating it every day did not benefit.

The Boston study, in a journal of the American Heart Association, looked at nearly 32,000 Swedish women aged between 48 and 83 over nine years.

Dieticians say eating chocolate too often



can be damaging and unhealthy.

The study notes that one or two 19 to 30 gram servings of dark chocolate a week led to a 32% reduction in heart failure risk.

This fell to 26% when one to three servings a month were eaten.

But those who ate chocolate every day did not appear to reduce their risk of heart failure at all.

Whilst antioxidants in chocolate may be helpful to your heart, they can also be found in fruit and veg - foods which don't come with the saturated fat and high calories

End Quote Victoria Taylor British Heart F

The researchers conclude the protective effect of eating chocolate reduces as more or less is eaten than the optimum one to two serv-

ings a week.

Too much chocolate is unhealthy because it contains high levels of sugar and fat which can make people put on weight, the researchers say.

But chocolate also contains high concentration of compounds called flavonoids which can lower blood pressure and protect against heart disease, previous studies have found.

The researchers behind this study say this is the first time long-term effects related specifically to heart failure have been shown.

You can't ignore that chocolate is a relatively calorie-dense food and large amounts of habitual consumption is going to raise your risks for weight gain. But if you're going to have a treat, dark chocolate is probably a good choice, as long as it's in moderation.

Cocoa content

Differences in chocolate quality will affect the study's implications, the authors say. Higher cocoa content is associated with greater heart benefits.

Although the chocolate consumed by the Swedish women in the study was milk chocolate, it contained a high concentration of cocoa solids - about 30%.

This is equivalent to dark chocolate by UK standards.

Dark chocolate can contain as much as 75% cocoa while standard milk chocolate may have 25% or less cocoa.

Victoria Taylor, senior dietitian at the British Heart Foundation, said the study showed the importance of finding the right balance in our diets.

In conclusion, before you rip open those sweet treats, remember that whilst antioxidants in chocolate may be helpful to your heart, they can also be found in fruit and veg - foods which don't come with the saturated fat and high calories that chocolate does

PICTURES AND EVENTS FROM THE WORLD



More aid pledges for Pakistan have come through after complaints that the international community's response to the devastating floods was inadequate. The European Union promised an extra \$39m following higher commitments from Australia and Japan, while the Islamic Development Bank pledged \$11.2m. The UN has said it has now raised nearly half of the \$460m (£295m) it needs for initial relief efforts. Meanwhile new flood warnings have been issued in some areas of Pakistan. Pakistani authorities say as many as 20 million people are affected by the floods. The UN says six million desperately need emergency aid but most still have not received it. Tens of thousands of villages remain under water.



A tropical storm buckets down on a quickly deserted street in Guangzhou, China.

June to September is monsoon season across most parts of Asia and the ensuing downpours this year have resulted in some severe flooding and landslides in several parts of China, India and Pakistan. Here is a quick recap of what has happened so far - and advice for travellers visiting affected regions. As always, please check travel advisories with your local government body prior to leaving or planning your trip.



A dynamic city of almost 20 million people, no single discernable centre point and few iconic landmarks does not make for an easy stroll, and if you have down-time in Shanghai between business meetings, making the most of it might not come easy. Depending, however, on the time of day you find yourself with a few spare hours, there are plenty of worthy diversions - if you only know where, and when, to find them.



Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru, India.

With the resort's (www.fourseasons.com/maldiveslg/) several conference-sized rooms, and private sea plane transfer from capital Malé, end your working day by dipping your toes in the Indian Ocean, then refresh for another day of discussion back in your serene thatched-roofed water bungalow. Visit the Marine Discovery Centre, which pioneers research into white sharks and manta rays, and consider persuading your company to give a little something in support of the Maldives' environmental efforts.

African conservationists 'shoot to kill poacher



Recovered poached black rhino horns displayed in Kenya (Archive photo) Rhino horns are valuable to poachers as they fetch a high price in Asia where they are used in medicine

Some conservation organisations in Africa are operating a shoot-to-kill policy against poachers, to protect endangered species, a study says.

An academic from the University of Manchester told the BBC that private security firms and mercenaries were being used to train game rangers.

Prof Rosaleen Duffy has researched the issue for 15 years for a book to be published this month.

She said these military-style campaigns were occurring across the continent. They can shoot first and ask questions later" Duffy says the development of nature tourism has meant international pressure to save high-profile species is intense.

Some conservation groups regard the protection of the gorilla, rhino and other endangered species as more important than human life, she says.

In countries, including Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi, private security firms have been brought in to provide military-style protection for these iconic animals.

Subsistence hunting is banned in many parks and often only tourists with hunting licences on safari are permitted to kill animals, she says.

This can mean local people are regarded as threats to the wildlife that have to be halted at almost any cost.

"Because private military operations and also park rangers are given authority to shoot on sight, the suspected poachers, then they can shoot first and ask questions later," she told the BBC.

"I think what happens then is that local people get justifiably very angry about people being shot because they're suspected of poaching whereas in fact what they might be doing is simply taking a short cut through a national park or they might be collecting grass for thatch."

Ms Duffy concedes that some poachers are heavily armed professionals - often former members of security forces - who are only too willing to open fire themselves.

But escalating this war for wildlife is, in Ms Duffy's view, not the way forward.

She argues that conservationists should work with local people, so that they value the animals that wander near their homes.

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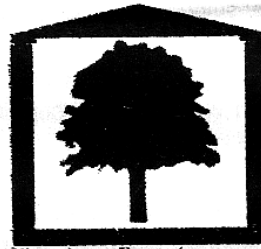
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NEWS FROM GREECE

Defence, security discussed by Greek, Israeli PMs

(ANA-MPA) -- Further development of defence relations and cooperation in the defence and security sectors were discussed on Tuesday by Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou and visiting Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

Talks were held on the picturesque isle of Poros, south of Athens, where the two premiers were joined by Greek Defence Minister Evangelos Venizelos and Alternate DM Panos Beggitis.

Both premiers and their wives departed on Tuesday morning for the Saronic Gulf island aboard a coast guard vessel from the Flisvos marina in southern coastal Athens. Earlier, Papandreou and the Netanyahu couple toured the early 20th century armored cruiser "Georgios Averof" as well as the adjacent mid-20th century destroyer "Velos", as both vessels currently serve as floating naval museums.

Gov't on Med Sea drilling

Environment, Energy and Climate Change Minister Tina Birbili on Tuesday cited Athens' concerns regarding deep-sea drilling in the Mediterranean Sea.

in a letter to her Italian counterpart Stefania Prestigiacomo, the Greek minister stressed that provisional restrictions on deep-sea drilling for oil are necessary until Mediterranean countries establish and adopt a specific strategy for such drilling in the Mediterranean basin.

'Antikythera Mechanism' exhibition opens on Kythera

An exhibition entitled "The Mechanism of Antikythera" will be on display on the southwestern Aegean island of Kythera (Kythira) until Sept. 19, an initiative by the ministry of education.

The exhibition opened on Aug. 11 in Potamos, Kythera while on Aug. 19 the exhibition will be transferred to Chora, the island's main town.

Visitors of the exhibition will be able to learn about the history of the ancient mechanism, believed to be an ancient mechanical calculator (also described as a primordial "mechanical computer") designed to calculate astronomical positions.

The artifact was discovered within an ancient shipwreck off the nearby isle of Antikythera, between Kythera and Crete. It has been dated to about 150-100 BC. Technological devices of similar complexity appeared a thousand years later, scholars have noted.

The hottest day of summer

Tuesday is expected to be the hottest day of the summer so far in Greece. Winds will fade and the highs will reach 41C in some parts of the country. Light winds will blow in Attica with high temperature expected to reach 40C and in downtown Athens 41C.

Temperatures on the islands will range

West Nile virus infects 47

Greece's Disease Control and Prevention Centre on Monday announced that 47 people have been infected by the West Nile virus so far.

The virus has claimed three victims so far.

Fifteen patients have been discharged from hospital while 28 are still receiving treatment, seven of whom in ICUs. One man infected with the virus has not been treated in a hospital.

Ecumenical Patriarch in Poland

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is paying an official visit to Poland following an invitation by the Polish Orthodox Church. The Patriarch who arrived on Monday and will conclude his visit on August 20, will visit the cities of Warsaw and Lublin and the Grabarka mountain, a holy land which visit thousands of pilgrims every year.

Bartholomew will have a series of meetings with the President of the Polish parliament and will be bestowed the title of the honorary doctor of at the Catholic University of Lublin.

NBG for Stopanska Bank

National Bank of Greece (NBG) announced on Tuesday that it was acquiring another 20 percent of Stopanska Banka, its subsidiary in the neighbouring former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM).

The acquisition was achieved via ANA-MPA two transactions on the Skopje stock market.

The additional 20 percent will bring NBG's share in Stopanska Banka, the country's largest, to 95 percent.

National Bank's first purchase of Stopanska Banka shares dates to 2000. ANA-MPA

Former dictator Ioannidis dies at 87

One of the last surviving key figures in the military junta that ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974 and which triggered the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, Dimitrios Ioannidis, died yesterday at the age of 87.

Ioannidis, who was jailed for life for his part in the dictatorship, had been transferred from his cell at Korydallos Prison to an Athens hospital after experiencing problems breathing on Sunday.

In 1967, he had played a prominent role alongside Georgios Papadopoulos, Stylianos Pattakos and Nikolaos Makarezos in toppling the government and installing an ultraconservative regime that was led by Papadopoulos, a colonel.

As a brigadier, Ioannidis was head of the notorious ESA military police that was responsible for imprisoning, exiling and torturing thousands of political dissidents during the dictatorship.

When Papadopoulos attempted to introduce some piecemeal democratic reforms following the bloody crushing of a student uprising on November 17, 1973, Ioannidis led a group of army hardliners that overthrew the colonel and installed a tougher regime, which was only to last eight months.

It was during this period that Ioannidis earned the nickname "the invisible dictator." Despite installing a president and prime minister, the brigadier retained control of the government. Disastrously, his regime overthrew Archbishop Makarios's government on Cyprus in July 1974, paving the way for the Turkish invasion of the island, which led to the northern part being occupied to this day.

Ioannidis's dictatorship fell in the summer of 1974 and he was tried for high treason. Papadopoulos died in 1999, Makarezos last year. Pattakos, who was released from jail in 1990 for health reasons, is still alive.

Ex-PM's aide seeks lower or no bail in Vatopedi case

Lawyers representing Yiannis Angelou, a close aide of former Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, yesterday asked the Athens Appeals Court to review the terms of his bail. Angelou, who denies playing a central role in setting up a real-estate exchange between the state and the Vatopedi Monastery, had his bail reduced last week from 400,000 euros to 300,000 on appeal. However, his lawyers argue that Angelou is unable to raise the 300,000 necessary and have asked that the terms be changed so the amount is either substantially lower or that Angelou not post any bail.

Korydallos inmate missing

An inmate at Korydallos Prison has escaped, authorities said yesterday. The prisoner is a 31-year-old Mexican national who had been arrested for drug trafficking, authorities said. He is believed to have escaped after hiding in a garbage truck that had entered the prison yard to collect trash.

Dangerous tree

Twenty people were injured when a 30-meter-tall pine tree collapsed during a celebration outside a church in Kiato, west of Athens, on Sunday evening. Two girls were seriously injured while another five people remained in the hospital yesterday.

West Nile virus

The number of Greeks who are ill with the West Nile virus rose to 47 yesterday, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO) said. Seven of these cases are in intensive care units in northern Greece, where most of the cases have been reported. So far, three elderly people with other health problems have died.



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'Being fat at four means a life of ill-health'

A bad diet in early childhood can lead to long-term problems. Children who are overweight at the age of four face a lifetime of ill-health, according to a leading expert.

Dr David Haslam, a GP who chairs the National Obesity Forum, says that the age of four is a crucial point, because once a child starts school "the battle is lost". Life patterns are already established and beginning school means the home stops being the sole place a child's diet is decided.

More than one in five children in England start their school life overweight or obese.

Some four-year-olds are so big now that, for the first time, Marks and Spencer has launched a range of out-sized schoolwear to cater for them.

Such overweight and obese children are left at increased risk of health problems such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease, joint and foot problems, as well as psychological problems.

'Missing a trick'

Dr Haslam, who is also a member of ESCO (Experts in Severe and Complex Obesity), a group set up to improve access and treatment for severe and complex obesity on the NHS, said giving midwives a more active role was vital.

He warns the NHS must go "back to the start of life" in order to prevent early childhood weight problems.

Pregnancy is the time to intervene, he says, by asking midwives to pass on healthy eating information to expectant mothers.

He feels that by not having midwives on board tackling obesity, the NHS is "missing a trick".

"When mums are pregnant there is no problem accessing 95% of them as they are in and out

of the GPs' and midwives' office. But there is very little done on weight management.

"The life of an obese person starts well before birth, when mum gets pregnant. What I am suggesting is that midwifery practices be more lifestyle and obesity focused.

By the age of four, if you haven't done anything to stop the problem then you have got trouble.

This poor kid has done nothing, there is nothing he could have done. He has a future of obesity with no chance of having a fit and lean future. If a patient is overweight by the age of four that makes our life much harder to treat in the long-term

He said prioritising breast feeding as vital was one key way of protecting against obesity and allergies. But he said some are still not heeding the advice.

Long-term problems

The latest research seems to suggest that the rate of increase is levelling off, but experts say there are still considerable problems, with 1.5 million children who are overweight or obese in England alone.

Women trust midwives and have a good relationship with them, but we need to be given space and resources to do this job. If we had the time and resources we could change attitudes.

Ex-Illinois Governor Blagojevich found guilty of lying

Rod Blagojevich faced 24 charges related to corruption in office.

Former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich has been found guilty of lying to agents.



A federal jury in Chicago found him guilty of making false statements but was unable to reach a unanimous verdict on 23 other corruption charges.

The judge said he intended to declare a mistrial on the remaining counts.

Blagojevich, 53, was accused of trying to use his office for personal gain - including a

bid to sell President Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat.

He was also accused of attempted extortion. After the verdict was announced, US attorneys said the government planned to retry the case "as quickly as possible".

Judge James B Zagel has set a hearing for 26 August to decide the timing of the retrial.

Blagojevich was found guilty of lying to federal agents when he said he did not track campaign contributions and that he kept a "firewall" between his political campaigns and his government work.

The charge carries a sentence of up to five years in prison.

The case involved hours of conversations wire-tapped by the FBI.

Defence lawyers had maintained that Blagojevich's talk was mere bluster and he had done nothing illegal.

Blagojevich, a Democrat, was ejected from office by the Illinois state legislature in January 2009.

Why Russia Spies

When a ring of Russian spies was discovered in the suburbs of several US cities in May, many commentators were quick to dismiss them as rather hapless.



Anna Chapman Despite appearances, Anna Chapman was part of a serious spying machine

There was, it seemed, a touch of comic opera about their covert activities, and the other details that emerged of their lives in the US - from the cultivation of hydrangeas, to the alluring pictures posted on Facebook by the most glamorous of the group, Anna Chapman.

But that's not how everyone saw it. Sir Stephen Lander, Director-General of MI5 until 2002, has told a BBC Radio 4 documentary, *Why Russia Spies*, that the very existence of a ring of Russian "illegals" (spies operating without diplomatic cover) is no laughing matter.

"The fact that they're nondescript or don't look serious is part of the charm of the business," he says. "That's why the Russians are so successful at some of this stuff.

"They're able to put people in those positions over time to build up their cover to be useful. They are part of a machine... And the machine is a very professional and serious one."

Illegal and invisible

The use of illegals, says Lander, is a menacing type of espionage, perfected by the Russians during the Cold War.

This can largely be attributed to a desire on the part of the Kremlin to be taken seriously as a major power - but neither the bombers nor the submarines can be ignored. The bombers are designed to carry air-launched nuclear cruise missiles. Some are also sophisticated aerial listening stations, capable of eavesdropping on military communications.

There are two reasons for this:

"One, to build up long-term cover with the eventual intention over many years to get a position in a government machine somewhere in the West, where they could spy for good.

"The other role was to be a head agent of a network of spies who had been recruited by others, perhaps the legal residency, and were run from a third country by an illegal - still an intelligence officer, but not under any official cover."

To British intelligence, the fact that Russia is still prepared to fund and deploy illegals against the West is a cause for concern, not least because illegals are extremely difficult to uncover.

Sir Gerry Warner, former deputy chief of the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, says illegals are heavily deployed in Russia's neighbouring states, like Ukraine and Georgia.

"If they wanted to have illegals they could have them here," says Warner, "I've no doubt about that. Whether they would think it worthwhile, I simply don't know."

Whether there are Russian illegals in Britain or not - and if there are, they are unlikely to be detected, Sir Gerry says - there is no doubt that "legal" Russian spies, those operating under diplomatic cover, are mounting an intelligence attack here. In fact, that attack is about as intense now as it was at the height of the Cold War.

"If you go back to the early 90s, there was a hiatus," says Lander. "Then the spying machine got going again and the SVR [formerly the KGB], they've gone back to their old practices with a vengeance.

"I think by the end of the last century they were back to where they had been in the Cold War, in terms of numbers."

What are those numbers? In the mid-1980s, during the Cold War, the Soviet embassy in Kensington and its trade mission in Highgate housed between 30 and 35 KGB officers, or their equivalents in military intelligence, the GRU, posing as diplomatic staff.

Together, they added up to about half of the USSR's diplomatic personnel in London. Today, the numbers are roughly the same, Whitehall sources believe.

Worth stealing

Sir David Omand, a former head of the intelligence agency GCHQ, and Co-ordinator of Security and Intelligence in the Cabinet Office until 2005, says that although the level of Russian spying is at Cold War levels, the targets have changed.

For the Soviet intelligence agencies there is that sense of momentum," he says, "that they just kept on going [after the Cold War]. But no doubt they switched their emphasis away towards economic targets.

They're after things that bear on the strategic position of Russia, particularly its growing importance in the energy world," he says.


So anything that gives them advantage in those areas would be worth stealing through spying. And the same applies to commercial developments and military developments.

A strong and peaceful Russia is in our interests. It's where they use covert and illegal means to leverage their position at the expense of the West that we need to have our eyes open.

PAPPAS WELCOMES SUMMER INTERNS TO HER OFFICE



Photo caption: Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas (back, center) welcomes summer interns to her office. The students from various schools got summer experience in an office which collects property tax and distributes the revenue to some 1,600 units of government across Cook County, the nation's second largest county. From left, first row: Edgar Izaguirre, Chicago Kennedy High School; Demetrius Roberts, Chicago Schurz High School; Joel Villaruel, Chicago Von Steuben High School; Jesus Valencia, Kennedy High School; Andy McLaughlin, DePaul University. Second row: Monica Padilla and Gladys Ybarra, Kennedy High School; Illana Golbin, Northwestern University; Analy Cuellan, Kennedy High School; Treasurer Pappas; Daisy Gonzales, Luvia Garcia and Araceli Aldana, Kennedy High School; and Yesenia Manrra, Schurz High School.



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Planet's top five tips for Ramadan travel



Eid-al-Fitr prayers, ending the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan Mubarak! With the Muslim holy month of Ramadan just started, now is a good time to learn to say "Happy Ramadan!" – especially if you are considering travel between 11 August and 10 September to countries with majority Muslim populations, like Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey and Morocco. With a few pointers, you can join a happy Ramadan already in progress.

1. Know the basics

Ramadan is a lunar month dedicated to sawm, or fasting, one of the five pillars of Islam. From sunup to sundown, the faithful abstain from food, drink, tobacco and sex to concentrate on spiritual renewal. After sunset, there is a euphoric iftar, or meal, to break the fast, followed by a late-night feast and sahur, a meal before the sun comes up and fasting begins again. Yet Ramadan is not all daytime discipline and nightly parties: it is a time of generosity and zakat, or charity, another of the five pillars of Islam. Fasting is not easy, so everyone slows down during the day – but you will also notice people going out of their way to extend small kindnesses.

2. Plan ahead

Like any holiday, Ramadan affects business as usual. Many venues operate with limited hours and staff, so try to book accommodation, transport and tours via internet or phone before you

arrive. Even if offices have posted hours, call ahead to ensure someone is available to meet your needs. Most restaurants close by day, so pack lunches or reserve ahead at restaurants that open for lunch in tourist areas.

3. Shift your schedule

Nightly festivities trump early bedtimes during Ramadan. Sunset streets come alive with light displays, music and offers of sweets at every intersection. After an iftar of dates, soup or savoury snacks, people of all ages binge on sweets until the late-night feast – followed by more visits and sweets, until wired kids finally wear themselves out. There is no rush to get up the next day, unless shopping is on the agenda. Stores often close in the afternoon, and bargaining is more pleasant before midday heat kicks in and lack of water is felt. As sundown approaches, the mood turns upbeat, with Ramadan finery on display and tantalizing aromas filling the streets.

4. Get into the Ramadan spirit

Do not worry: you will not be expected to fast during Ramadan. According to tradition, even Muslim travellers are exempt from fasting – it is hard to do at home under controlled conditions, let alone in unfamiliar places. To show your support, avoid eating or drinking on the street in front of people who are probably fasting, and grant people privacy at prayer times.

5. Accept hospitality

When a new friend offers you special Ramadan sweets or invites you to a family feast, polite refusal would be crushing. You are not obliged to return the favour or eat the sweets: you honour givers just by accepting their generosity in the spirit of Ramadan. Kindness can be repaid by practicing zakat, and giving to a local charity.

Trafficked children working in UK 'cannabis farms'

A 'cannabis factory' in Woolwich, London raided by police in 2006 Cannabis is being grown on an industrial scale in 'cannabis factories'

Children are being trafficked into the UK to work in so-called 'cannabis factories' according to police.

detections."

Criminals have traditionally used residential homes for the factories, blacking out windows and installing high intensity lighting and a watering system to propagate the plants.

'Gardeners' rarely let out

The report explains how illegal Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants are trafficked into the country and then put to work as 'gardeners' in the factories.

They can pay up to £10,000 per person to be smuggled into the UK and many then have to pay off their debts by tending to the cannabis plants.

They are often left in instructions in their own language telling them how and when to feed the plants.

They are rarely, if ever, allowed to leave the property until the crop is ready to be harvested, with food and other necessities being brought to them.

Smuggled children

The report says children have been trafficked into the UK to work in factories, to divert electricity and to raid rival cannabis farms. Even if they are found by the authorities getting their co-operation has proved extremely difficult.

"Children identified as victims of trafficking appear extremely wary of authorities and communicate little about their experiences in exploitation or about their captors.

"This may be because they are fearful for family members, as many will have unpaid debts, perhaps explaining their reasons for not disclosing information and going missing from care."

As well as growing cannabis the intelligence suggests the criminals who grow cannabis are involved in a range of criminal activity.

That includes producing and distributing most types and classes of drugs, counterfeit currency, fake DVDs, money laundering, prostitution, forgery and what they call 'bad on bad' crimes such as extortion, blackmail, kidnap, robbery and assault.



The factories grow cannabis on an industrial scale. They are typically located in private houses, but sometimes in agricultural and commercial properties

A study for the Association of Chief Police Officers has found children are being used to tend crops, to illegally divert electricity for the factories, and to break into rival sites.

Even if the children are found they rarely talk about what has happened to them and often run away from local authority care.

Growing scale

The report into the commercial cultivation of cannabis shows how the number of factories discovered by the police has grown massively in recent years.

Between 2004 and 2007 police discovered an average of 800 factories a year. In 2007/08 that rose to just over 3,000, and by 2009/10 it ballooned to almost 7,000.

ACPO says that rise is being driven by a number of factors. Commander Allan Gibson is the Association's lead on tackling cannabis production.

"The police response is now stronger and more effective through better co-ordination and intelligence sharing between forces and other agencies and more covert operations against the operators.

The level of publicity around cannabis since its reclassification in 2008 has meant that more members of the community are now reporting any unusual signs of habitation in buildings and houses which is leading to more

Top 10 European seaside escapes

The greatest seaside escapes are usually the ones that nobody else knows about: the ones down the mile-long sandy trail, the ones at the bottom of the rickety steps, the ones you inflate your dinghy and paddle out to. But even the most well-known places can feel intimate if you time it right. Plan a trip to one of these European seaside escapes in September or October (when the weather is still good and the crowds dwindle) and you will see what is so great about them

1. Cinque Terre, Italy

Rooted in antiquity, Cinque Terre's five towns date from the early medieval period and barely anything about these five crazily constructed Ligurian villages has changed in over three centuries. Buildings aside, Cinque Terre's most unique historical feature is the steeply terraced cliffs bisected by a complicated system of fields and gardens that has been shaped over the course of nearly two millennia.

2. Santorini, Greece

Even the most jaded traveller succumbs to the spectacle of Santorini's surreal landscape and dramatic sunsets. The startling sight of the submerged caldera, almost encircled by sheer lava-layered cliffs and topped by a dusting of towns, should not be missed.

3. San Sebastian, Spain

The coast road from Bilbao to San Sebastián is a glorious journey past spectacular seascapes, with cove after cove stretching east and verdant fields suddenly ending where cliffs plunge into the sea. Casas rurales (village or farmstead accommodation) and camping grounds are plentiful and well signposted. The tiny hamlet of Elantxobe, with its colourful houses clasping to an almost sheer cliff face, is undeniably one of the most attractive spots along the entire coast.

4. Corsica, France

Crowned by saw tooth peaks, mantled in forest cloaks of green oak, chestnut and pine, and shot through with rushing rivers and tumbling cascades, Corsica is one of the most dramatic, diverse and downright gorgeous islands in the Mediterranean. Fine stretches of sand can be found at Spérone and around the Golfe de Sant'Amanza. Best of all is the horseshoe bay of Rondinara and tree-fringed Palombaggia, which you will see gracing postcards all over Corsica.

5. Kvarner Gulf, Croatia

Protected by soaring mountains, covered with luxuriant forests, lined with beaches and dotted with islands, the Kvarner Gulf is home to four of our top Croatian beaches. At the southern end of Krk Island, Baška has the island's most beautiful beach, a two km-long crescent set below a dramatic, barren range of mountains. Cres Island is home to beaches and crystal-clear coves at Lubenice, accessible by a steep path through the underbrush, and Beli.

6. Amalfi Coast, Italy

Stretching about 50km along the southern side of the Sorrentine Peninsula, the Amalfi is one of Europe's most breathtaking. Cliffs terraced with scented lemon groves sheer down into sparkling seas; sherbet-hued villas cling precariously to unforgiving slopes while sea and sky merge in one vast blue horizon. The pearl in the pack, Positano is the coast's most photogenic and expensive town.

7. Côte d'Azur, France

With its glistening seas and charming, tangled old-town streets foreigners have admired the Côte d'Azur for centuries. Also known as the French Riviera due to a string of influential sojourners from Queen Victoria to F.

8. Menorca, Spain

Menorca is the least overrun and most tranquil of the Balearics. The untouched beaches, coves and ravines around its coastline allow the more adventurous the occasional sense of discovery. The north coast is rugged and rocky, dotted with small and scenic coves.

9. Curonian Spit, Lithuania

This 98km lick of sand is a wondrous mixture of dunes (some as high as 200m) and forest – the smell of pine will impart an otherworldly quality to your hammock time. Wilhelm von Humboldt believed that a trip to the Curonian Spit was essential nourishment for the soul, and Thomas Mann was also drawn to this timeless wonderland.

10. England's Victorian seaside towns

While England's weather can not compete with the Mediterranean, there are two great seaside escapes just over an hour from London that can. An hour's train ride east of London is the Victorian seaside town of Broadstairs. Charles Dickens wrote a few of his books in the cliff-top house overlooking Viking Bay. Grab an ice-cream at Morelli's and wander down the broad stairs to the beach. An hour's train ride south of London is Brighton, the most vibrant seaside resort in England..

Actor Michael Douglas treated for throat tumour



Michael Douglas Douglas stars in Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps Hollywood actor Michael Douglas is being treated for a tumour in his throat, his publicist has said. The Wall Street star, who is married to actress Catherine Zeta Jones, will undergo eight weeks of radiation and chemotherapy. "I am very optimistic," the 65-year-old Oscar winner told People magazine. The actor's spokesman told the publication that doctors expect him to make a full recovery. Douglas stars in a Wall Street sequel, out this autumn. In June, Douglas's son from his first marriage, Cameron, was sentenced to five years in prison for dealing methamphetamine and possessing heroin. Douglas also has two children from his marriage to Zeta Jones, whom he married in 2000. The actor is the son of film legend Kirk Douglas. His other films include Romancing the Stone, The American President, Basic Instinct, Falling Down and Traffic.

US says China's military has seen secret expansion



PICTURE: China's People's Liberation Army testing missiles in the South China Sea, 29 July 2010. China's People's Liberation Army tests missiles in the South China Sea

The growth of China's military is shrouded in secrecy which could give rise to "misunderstanding and miscalculation", a US defence department report says.

China has been upgrading its land-based missiles, expanding its submarine force and nuclear arsenal, the Pentagon's annual report to Congress said. It also said that China has extended its military advantage over Taiwan. The report confirms US concerns about the rapid growth of China's military. China has 1,150 short-range ballistic missiles and an unknown number of medium-range missiles, the report says.