

# NATIONAL HELLENIC



## FREE PRESS



### GREEK AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

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## GREECE UNDER SUPERVISION

August 2010 in Greece. A hot summer month, both weather-wise and management of the public depth. The troika representatives as the Greeks call the team with members from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union Bank (EUB) and the European Union (EU) are here to inspect and verify the accomplishments of the Greek economy operating under the measures agreed on the famous memoranda by the Greek government.

Most of the people, rich and poor are on vacation, crowding the open beaches of Greece. The government too is on vacation. With the temperature hovering around one hundred degrees (38-40 C) continuously for days all activities have been reduced to bare minimum. The talkative TV windows are showing very boring old movie pictures. Small businesses stores are either closing for lack of business or the owners are gone for an extended vacation, since business have gone down due to economic crisis. This is also the time that political happenings and news are at a minimum.

The representatives of the international lenders came, finished their inspection and gone. Apparently satisfied from what they saw they gave the government of George Papandreou and Greece a better than passing grade. It seems Greece did better than expected and now is moving to the next face of its program of good housekeeping, of tighter control of public spending and collection of taxes in order to secure the next installment for its loan payment due in December 2010.

The big strikes and riots originated and organized by the Unions representing practically every sector of the society, taking place mostly in Athens and Thessaloniki are over, for the time being. Probably there are no persons available to walk the hot streets and it seems nobody wants to miss his or her vacation to the Greek Islands. The ferry boats are crowded and the hotels are full despite the constant complaints that tourism this year is a small percentage down compared to last year. If indeed this is true the high prices demanded for every service may be something to consider. A hotel beach chair under the umbrella on the beach is free but although you are a guest you have to buy something and the lowest cost item, a coffee, costs 3.5 Euros (\$4.55) a person including a small bottle of water. Chalkidiki in Northern Greece, a tourist destination for Europeans is full of foreigners and local vacationers. This year there are a lot of Germans and people from the neighboring states of Greece.

The prevailing public and private discussions are centered around the economy and more specifically on pensions. How much people in different professions will receive as pensions and at what age, under the new rules passed in the parliament. The great number and variety of independent pension funds are being consoli-

(Continued on p. 3)

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- 4.To encourage all worthy Community causes
- 5 To assist all the Greek-American fraternal, cultural patriotic and religious organizations
- 6.To install Americanism in the Greek-American community
- 7.To advance the just causes of Hellenism.
8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

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## ENTERTAINMENT LIVE

*By Dionysia Rekoumis*

Late night talk show host Jay Leno dropped by Sarah Palin's hometown to help open an Air Force Reserve recruiting office.

The host of "The Tonight Show" was in Alaska recently to perform a show at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage.

He also helped cut a ribbon for the opening of an Air Force Reserve recruiting office in Wasilla, the home of Palin, the former Alaska governor and GOP vice presidential nominee.

KTUU-TV reports Leno shook hands with fans and inspected several vehicles driven to the event, including a small truck rebuilt to resemble a giant Radio Flyer red wagon. Leno thanked new recruits who were sworn in during the grand opening.

The Social Network kept adding friends as it topped the box office for a second straight weekend, earning \$15.5 million, according to Box Office Mojo.



The film about the founding of Facebook now has a two-week total of \$46 million, based on studio estimates Sunday.

The Katherine Heigl-Josh Duhamel romantic comedy Life as We Know It brought in \$14.6 million, while Secretariat, a film about the legendary Triple Crown-winning horse, managed to race only to third place with \$12.6 million. It was the first weekend for both movies.

Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole finished fourth; its \$7 million haul brought its three-week total to \$39.4 million. Fifth: My Soul to Take took in \$6.9 million in its debut weekend.

Rounding out the top 10: The Town, (No. 6, \$6.4 million); Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, (No. 7, \$4.6 million); Easy A (No. 8, \$4.2 million); Case 39 (No. 9, \$2.6 million); and You Again (No. 10, \$2.4 million)

With rumors of infidelity swirling around Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore, the couple has jetted off to Israel for a little quality time.

"Sharing Love & Light while in Israel," Ashton Tweeted on last Saturday. "Asking 4 the energy 2 forg The pair, who married five years ago in a Kabbalah ceremony, has been embroiled in a series of tabloid scandals in recent weeks, with two women alleging affairs with the former "Punk'd" star.

As previously reported on Access-Hollywood.com, Ashton immediately took to his Twitter page to combat the allegations, writing, "STAR magazine - you don't get to stand behind "freedom of the press" when you are writing fiction," and threatening legal action.

### MUSIC

Justin Bieber is ready to give his fans a total beauty treatment. The 16-year-old singer has partnered with Nicole by OPI to design a collection of nail polishes inspired by his hit songs.

Available exclusively at Wal-Mart starting

in December, Bieber's collection of primary color polishes have names like One Less Lonely Girl (lavender), Me + Blue (dark blue) and OMB! (bright red), reports AOL's Style List.

Bieber's first six shades will debut in December, while eight others will hit stores in January.

The highest-ranking North Korean official who had defected to the South was found dead on Sunday morning, a local report said. YTN TV reported cited an unnamed government official as saying that Hwang Jang-yop, 87, a former North Korean Workers' Party secretary, appeared to have died of a heart attack at his home in South Korea.

His death occurred just before the North started a giant military parade on the 65th anniversary of the founding of the ruling party.

Hwang was a key architect of the North's socialist ideology, but had been harshly critical of leader Kim Jong-il since his defection 13 years ago.

- Leona Gage, who in 1957 was named Miss USA but had the title stripped the next day when pageant officials learned she was married and a mother of two, has died in Los Angeles, her son said Saturday. She was 71. Gage died of heart failure after spending several weeks at a Sherman Oaks hospital on Tuesday, son Robert Kaminer told the Associated Press.

Like Vanessa Williams and Carrie Prejean decades later, Gage's pageant scandal probably brought her more fame than if she had kept the crown. Born Mary Leona Gage in Texas, she was appeared as Miss Maryland USA in the competition in Long Beach, Calif. Gage also lied about her age — telling pageant officials she was 21 when she was 18. She told reporters after winning that she didn't even have a boyfriend.

"I want to wait until I'm 26 before I become seriously interested in the opposite sex," she said, according to the Baltimore Sun. Just a day later her story was exposed. She had been already been married twice, both times at age 14 — the first was quickly annulled — and had her second child at 16, all forbidden for the resume of a pageant contestant.

Finally in local news,

### Party For A Purpose

Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Illinois Associate Board Hosts I Wish To Party

**WHAT:** Chicago's young professionals are invited for hors d'oeuvres and a private cocktail reception that will help grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions. Ticket price includes three hours of beer, wine and SKYY Vodka cocktails.

The program for the evening features DJ entertainment, a raffle offering gift packages for an overnight hotel stay, tickets to sporting events, certificates for dining at some of Chicago's best restaurants and more.

**WHERE:** The Griffin Lounge 326 W. Chicago Avenue, Chicago

**WHEN:** Friday, November 12 from 7 to 10 p.m.

**COST:** Tickets are \$40 per person online (before Nov 6<sup>th</sup>) or \$50 per person afterwards and at the door. Purchase tickets online at [www.iwishtoparty.org](http://www.iwishtoparty.org) All proceeds benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois.

**WHO:** The Associate Board is a group of young professionals helping to support the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois through event-based fundraising, volunteering and outreach. The Associate Board was formed in 2006 and since its inaugural year has raised more than \$275,000 for Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois.

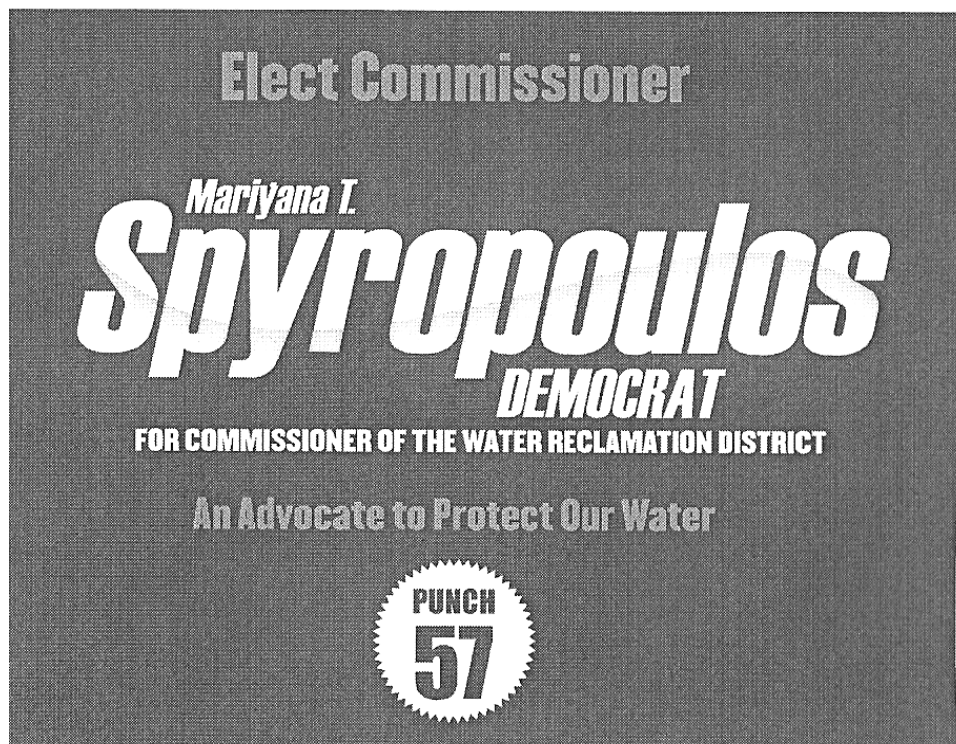


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# NEWS FROM GREECE

## IKA seeking 1 bln euros

Social security fund short of cash to pay pensions and unemployment benefits.

Greece’s largest social security organization, IKA, will have to borrow more than 1 billion euros to pay pensions and benefits at the end of this year and at the start of 2011 due to a massive shortfall in its finances that has been caused by the rising unemployment rate and the inability of a growing number of companies and individuals to pay their monthly contributions.

Sources told Kathimerini that the government has little option but to borrow the money and has contacted two commercial banks about the possibility of them lending the funds, though the Labor Ministry has yet to confirm that this is the case. It is expected to make a formal announcement over the next two weeks.

IKA already owes some 300 million euros to the Manpower Organization (OAED) for the payment of unemployment benefits, as it has been unable over the last few months to pay out the 200 million euros per month that are needed.

The drain on IKA’s financial resources has been fueled by the country’s rising unemployment rate. Unemployment in Greece hit a 10-year high in the second quarter of 2010, according to data released by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) last month. ELSTAT found the jobless rate had increased to 11.8 percent compared to

8.9 percent a year earlier. That is the highest rate since 2000, when unemployment peaked at 12.3 percent.

The proportion of Greeks out of work is expected to reach 15 percent by the end of next year and, according to calculations that IKA has carried out, this would lead to a 25 percent rise in the amount it spends on paying unemployment benefits.

The government will need to receive a green light from its lenders – the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund – before IKA can apply for a loan but at present it doesn’t seem to have other options.

IKA recently announced that it would offer favorable repayment terms to businesses and individuals that owed it money but this has failed to have any significant impact on its finances. Sources said that the initiative has only

## Homeless numbers rising as crisis bites

The number of homeless people in Athens and other major cities has increased sharply over the past few months, as a rising number of Greeks and immigrants are laid off by employers struggling to make ends meet.

The number of people sleeping on streets, parks and in derelict buildings across Greece is believed to be significantly higher than last year when the Health Ministry registered 7,720 homeless people, less than half the estimate of 20,000 that was given by nongovernment organizations.

According to a nurse working at Klimaka, one of these NGOs operating in Athens, an increasing number of unemployed Greeks are seeking help. “Last week two sacked factory laborers, aged 35 and 45, came to us – they’d been looking for work for months,” Efi Stamatoyannopoulou told Kathimerini. Klimaka has also been approached by a middle-aged Greek cleaner who has been homeless for months and by a young man who is working part-time as a model while sleeping on park benches. An increasing number of immigrants are also seeking the help of Klimaka and other NGOs. One Bulgarian migrant, a former teacher who had sought the help of Klimaka after resorting to alcohol, was killed last month in a brawl with another homeless person over a sleeping spot in the city center.

Eleftherios Skiadas, Athens’s deputy mayor for social solidarity, reported a “a sharp increase in homeless people seeking our services,” adding that the profile of homeless people in Athens was changing. “These are people, young and old, who have lost their jobs and can no longer make ends meet,” said Skiadas.

At the end of last month, the City of Athens opened a new shelter for the homeless on Patission Street, near central Athens. The building has a capacity of 60 beds.

## Greek men are mommy’s boys

It seems that the stereotype of the average Greek man who lives at home until a worryingly advanced age and relies on his mother to do all his cooking and cleaning might be accurate after all.

According to figures made public yesterday by Eurostat, the European Union’s statistics agency, Greeks are more likely to live at home with their parents until their late 20s or mid-30s than almost any other European men.

The numbers indicate that 56 percent of Greek men aged 25 to 34 live in their parents’ home. Only men in Bulgaria (61 percent) and Slovenia (60) percent are more reliant on their mothers and fathers.

By contrast, only 8 percent of Finns, 4 percent of Swedes and 3 percent of Danes in the same age group live at their parental homes. The EU average was 32 percent.

Greek men also rank last in terms of the proportion who cohabit with their partners.

However, the survey was also revealing about the tendencies of Greek women in their 20s and 30s. It indicated that 36 percent of them also remain with mom and dad between the ages of 25 and 34, just behind Slovenia (38 percent) and Slovakia (42 percent). The EU average was 20 percent.

Unsurprisingly, Greece also ranks high in the 18-24 age group, where 67.7 percent of women and 84.4 percent of men live with their parents. The EU average in this age group was 71 percent for women and 82 percent for men.

The survey, which used 2008 figures, found that 46 percent of Europeans aged 18 to 34 (or 51 million people in total) still live with their parents.

## RAILWAY STRIKE

### Minister, workers fail to agree

Workers at the Hellenic Railways Organization (OSE) said yesterday that they will stage a 24-hour strike on Thursday after being unable to reach an agreement with Transport Minister Dimitris Reppas over imminent changes at the company, which the government is trying to privatize. The workers wanted a commitment that the employees who remain at OSE will still have a collective contract and that those who will be transferred to other departments within the public sector would retain the same wages. Reppas said that only those that remain at OSE will stay at the same wage.

Bus guards. The company that operates Thessaloniki’s public buses (OASTH) said yesterday that it will employ private security guards as of tomorrow on its buses and at major bus stops to ensure passenger safety. OASTH said the unarmed guards will carry two-way radios and have been instructed to intervene if they see any offenses being committed.

## Heating oil

Distributors of heating oil are threatening not to begin delivering fuel as of October 15 unless the government speeds up the process by which they are repaid the special consumption tax they must pay out when buying the oil. The head of Greece’s petrol station owners’ union, Dimitris Makrivelios, said that the government owes the distributors money from last year. He added that heating fuel would be sold at 73 to 75 cents per liter this year, compared to 52 to 53 last year.

## ‘Arsonist’ detained

A 28-year-old man was in detention yesterday after members of the police force’s motorcycle-riding DIAS unit arrested him outside a prefectural office in Peristeri, western Athens, with a homemade explosive device in his bag. Officers believe the man had been planning to plant the device, which comprised gas canisters and a plastic bottle containing a flammable liquid, at the office, though any possible motive remained unclear. A search of the man’s home turned up a stiletto switchblade, two brass knuckles and an extendable police baton.



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## Rich nations 'failing to deliver climate cash'

Rich nations are failing to live up to their promise of giving US\$30bn to poor countries to help them cope with climate change, according to a report.

The money was pledged at last year's Copenhagen summit in order to build trust between rich and poor nations. The scheme - championed by former UK PM Gordon Brown - is supposed to deliver the funds by the end of 2012.

But a report to the German government says much of the money has been taken from other aid budgets. If the findings are correct, it confirms allegations by pressure groups that rich countries are repackaging existing funds and presenting them as special climate finance.

Campaigners claim programmes to tackle poverty will suffer if this is allowed to happen.

Cash transfer from rich to poor is a major theme at the Tianjin climate conference, the last major gathering before this year's UN climate summit in Mexico.

Delegates also heard an update about potential sources for the agreed \$100bn long-term climate finance. The report on the \$30bn short-term cash is by the consultancy Climate Analytics. It says a total of \$31.2bn has been pledged so far - more than the amount promised at the global gathering in the Danish capital last December.

### Devil in detail

But the question is what counts as "new and additional finance". The term was used in the controversial Copenhagen Climate Accord, but has no agreed definition.

The paper concludes that if the only funds counted are new climate funds additional to official aid budgets since Copenhagen, then the sum raised so far is just \$8.2bn.

China climate talks (Image: Reuters) The round of talks in China are the final ones before the UN climate summit in Mexico

A more generous definition of additional finance might see the allowable funds swelled to \$17bn - but even this is far from the \$30bn figure.

The report says there is very little transparency in

rich countries' pledges.

The claim comes as rich nations are demanding transparency in developing nations' actions to tackle climate change.

"There must be much better verification of developed countries' finance proposals," Xie Zhenhua, China's chief climate negotiator, told BBC News.

Bill Hare from Climate Analytics said: "This is a really important issue because so much trust has been lost in the climate negotiations with so many rich nations failing to live up to their legally binding targets to cut emissions, then asking the developing nations to do more to tackle climate change.

"This fund will look like a scam if it's not improved. If you can't have trust - and this process has been severely damaged by lack of trust - it's going to be very bad news indeed."

John Drexage from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Canada told BBC News: "We mustn't get too obsessed about this - if we are not careful a big chunk of the money will go in paying wealthy consultants from rich countries to find out how much money is new."

A former diplomat was more cynical about the "smoke and mirrors" of international finance: "Treasuries don't allow ministers to make spending pledges - they go into a side room and warn there is no new money available - then they get creative as to how to present a package that will look good on paper.

"There's a huge amount of grey area here - it's impossible to be precise on these figures."

Meanwhile, the meeting heard about progress from the high-level advisory panel tasked with finding the annual \$100bn to be given by rich nations to poor nations from 2020.

## PICTURES OF THE WORLD



*The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Liu Xiaobo, China's most prominent dissident, who is currently serving an 11-year prison sentence on subversion charges. He has spent two decades advocating for peaceful political change, civil liberties and judicial independence. The Chinese Communist government immediately blacked out news of the award, calling the decision a "desecration" of the peace prize.*



*The store opened at the beginning of this year. Unlike the regular convenience stores that Baghdad is accustomed to, it is a multistorey supermarket with the deli and fresh food aisles on the ground floor, comparable with any superstore elsewhere in the world — except for the large number of security guards. It is a welcome sight, as chain stores and other western-linked businesses gradually disappeared from Iraq after the Baath Party revolution in 1968. As orthodox as the end product might seem, the store's operating procedures are unusual for Iraq. Food and loading trucks are nowhere to be seen, yet the aisles are stocked with kitchen utensils, brands of shower gels and clothing. "Because of the security situation we have to work like thieves; right before dusk or soon after dawn we hastily carry our merchandise into the store in batches, in saloon cars," said Fareed Sadoun Salih, an employee. Mr. Rifai added: "We cannot rely on remote suppliers. We purchase from nearby vendors. Business is good, but the staff members maintain a low profile because their biggest fear is "getting kidnapped." Such is life for anyone with money in Iraq.*



*MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. — Anyone driving the twists of Highway 1 between San Francisco and Los Angeles recently may have glimpsed a Toyota Prius with a curious funnel-like cylinder on the roof. Harder to notice was that the person at the wheel was not actually driving. The car is a project of Google, which has been working in secret but in plain view on vehicles that can drive themselves, using artificial-intelligence software that can sense anything near the car and mimic the decisions made by a human driver. With someone behind the wheel to take control if something goes awry and a technician in the passenger seat to monitor the navigation system, seven test cars have driven 1,000 miles without human intervention and more than 140,000 miles with only occasional human control. One even drove itself down Lombard Street in San Francisco, one of the steepest and curviest streets in the nation. The only accident, engineers said, was when one Google car was rear-ended while stopped at a traffic light.*

Please join the Pontian Greek Society of Chicago

### “Xeniteas”

for its 33rd annual dinner dance on Saturday,  
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# Referendum brings strength to Turkey's Erdogan

By Jonathan Head

Overwhelming support for constitutional change in Turkey's recent referendum is being seen as a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan but some opponents still see him as a threat to modern Turkey's secular state. Turkey's prime minister may be many things - scathing critic of Israel and self-styled pal of Iranian President Ahmadinejad - but an aficionado of the contemporary rock music scene, he is not.

After all, here is a man who tells women to have more children, who once tried to outlaw adultery, and who said recently that he could not understand why people had to drink wine, when they could just eat the grapes instead. So who, I wondered, was going to come off best out of a meeting with the Irish mega-band U2, who were here for their first concert in Turkey? It does not help that the lofty prime minster has a habitually brusque manner, and that at well over 6ft (1.8m) tall he literally towers over his guests.

He has brushed aside the objections, at home and abroad, to his religious piety, to his abrasive leadership, and to his ambitious new foreign policy. But the meeting went on for an hour. And the wily prime minister made good use of it at the rally he was addressing afterwards to drum up support for his constitutional reform package.

"I just came from a meeting with Bono from U2," he told the crowd, "And do you know what he asked me? He said, 'brother, why did you go to jail?'" And so Mr Erdogan was able to relate to the crowd how he was sentenced to prison 12 years ago just for reciting an Islamic poem, reminding his audience of the tight restrictions on religious expression which are one of the targets of his reform drive.

## Popular support

The recent weeks have reminded people here once again that they should never underestimate Recep Tayyip Erdogan. About 49.5 million people were eligible to vote in the referendum He has been in office eight years now. An impressive feat in a country once known for its revolving-door coalition governments. He has brushed aside the objections, at home and abroad, to his religious piety, to his abrasive leadership, and to his ambitious new foreign policy.

There were plenty of good reasons to oppose some of his constitutional amendments, and many Turks did, but Mr Erdogan proved that he still has what it takes to get people behind him when it counts. His margin of victory in the referendum was larger than most polls predicted.

He is on track now for a third election win next year. That would make him the most powerful political figure in modern Turkish history.

So should the world be quaking in its shoes? Some writers in the Western media say yes, it should. Turkey, according to this scenario, is turning its back on the West, embracing Iran, Syria and Hamas. With his apparently unstoppable election machine, Mr Erdogan will roll back the secular regime forged by Turkey's founding father Ataturk, and impose an Islamic republic.

I think this is pretty far-fetched. Turkey is not Iran, nor is it the inward-looking, state-dominated country it was as recently as 30 years ago. It is the world's 17th largest economy, built on a foundation of world-class exporting businesses.

Lifestyles in some parts of Istanbul rival those of Rome, Paris or London - although lifestyles in some eastern Anatolian villages are not too far from what you would find in Afghanistan. It is a very diverse place, which in part explains the deep polarisation of politics.

## Conservative values

I was in a village near the Greek border the other day, during Ramadan, and asked the farmers there how many people were fasting. They laughed at the question. About 10, they said, out of more than 300 residents. They were all Muslims, but none was a fan of the prime minister. No evidence has yet emerged that Mr Erdogan has a radical Islamic agenda. Much of provincial Turkey thinks like him, and so they vote for him.

The complaints against him - and there are plenty - are pretty standard in Turkish politics. That he is autocratic and thin-skinned. It is not pleasant if you are on the receiving end of one of his tirades. Even worse if you have been slapped with criminal charges, as some cartoonists have for their caricatures of him. But there is nothing especially Islamic about that.

Instead, he describes himself as a conservative, pro-business and pro-family values. Much of provincial Turkey thinks like him, and so they vote for him. When I asked him recently why he thought he had failed to bridge the gulf separating secular and religious Turks he seemed puzzled by the question. "But I'm the prime minister for the whole country," he protested, "just look at what I've done. I've provided services to everyone, I've turned 81 provinces into building sites." It seemed to be his proudest boast. Watching him working the crowds and pressing the flesh before the referendum, it was obvious what he was - a politician, through and through, interested most of all in winning votes, and getting re-elected. If that is the case, Turkey's secular democracy is probably safe.



Rescuers have drilled through to the underground chamber where 33 Chilean miners have been trapped since August. The breakthrough at the San Jose mine came shortly after 0800 local time (1200 GMT), sparking celebrations. It means efforts to remove the miners through the tunnel should begin within days. The men were trapped when part of the mine collapsed on 5 August - their 65-day ordeal is the longest suffered by a group of miners caught underground. They have been living in a shelter 700m (2,300ft) underground. However, the Plan B drill - the second of three which have been working simultaneously - has penetrated 624m to a workshop which can be reached by the miners.

# Immigration and economy fuel Spanish anxiety

By Pascale Harter

The economic downturn has hit Spain hard, especially its immigrant workers, among whom unemployment is 10% higher than the national average. But are calls for them to return to their native countries caused by financial worries or by fears about how Spain is changing following unprecedented immigration to the country in recent years?



"Immigrants who can't find work should go home now," Jose Luis Roberto tells me. He is the president of the political party Espana 2000. But I wonder if it is not the lack of jobs, but what he says next that is the real reason he wants immigrants to leave. "We don't want Muslims here who don't integrate and whose religion is incompatible with Spanish culture."

Espana 2000 may be a small party, with only three members elected to council level and only 3,000 members nationwide, but its views cannot be dismissed. The rate of immigration into Spain over the last few years has been extreme, not just for the numbers - during the boom 500,000 migrants were arriving every year - but because it has been so sudden.

## 'All suffering together'

In 1999, Spain was a country with barely any immigrants at all. Today they make up 12% of the population. Moroccans form the second largest immigrant group here. Many of them are young men who have come to Spain alone. They are under-schooled and under-skilled, so they stand little chance of finding employment in the current downturn.

"I'm not saying Spain is racist," says Mustafa Assan. He has worked here for 14 years. He has married and had children in Spain and, even though he has not been able to find work for a year now, he says he cannot even consider going back to Morocco. Spain is his country and I can hear it in the easy, colloquial way he speaks the language. His every gesture utterly Spanish.

Spain had changed anyway, with the economic liberalisation and investment that came with membership of the EU.

"Sufrimos juntos," he says - "We're all suffering together." (Spanish people cannot find work either.) I met Mustafa in a bar in El Ejido in the south. He was having coffee, waiting for his number to come up in the unemployment queue.

## Local hub

Bars play a particular role in Spanish life. Local bars are the lynchpins of the community, so perhaps they are a useful measure of how much immigration is changing Spain. The bar is where workmen go for a cognac at 6am.

By 10.55am, coffee cups and saucers line the tables, ready for the white-collar workers who descend from the surrounding office blocks and are back at their desks five minutes later, leaving

the bar deserted but for stained cups and cigarette butts.

When my family came to visit me in Barcelona, I had to introduce them to Juan, the owner of my local bar. Not to have done so would have been rude. It was Juan who fed me for free when I locked myself out of the flat without my wallet. It was Juan who got a ladder and climbed in through the open window to let me back in.

I knew he was struggling during the recession but, when I came back from a work trip and found the bar closed for good, I was not the only one on the street to be horrified. Juan's bar has been replaced by a clothes shop you find on high streets all over the world.



## Shopping habits

The downturn has changed Spain for good, perhaps more than rapid, high rates of immigration. Spain had changed anyway, with the economic liberalisation and investment that came with membership of the European Union. Spanish shoppers have forsaken the open-air markets for the French-owned supermarket chain Carrefour And it is sad. You do not tend to talk to people at the supermarket checkout.

You cannot help but get caught up in conversation at the market, though. There is always an old lady in front of you in the queue, inspecting a cut of meat to cook for her son's visit. "He's a doctor you know," she'll say, before giving the stall owner and the rest of the queue a full description of his house, job and beautiful children, as well as an aside about the wife who is not quite good enough. When I first lived here in 1995, everyone went to the market. In the handful of supermarkets there were then in Barcelona, there was not a single brand name I could recognise.

Now the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis who have set up shops all over the city stock PG Tips tea and Heinz baked beans. Because despite the speed with which the immigrant community has grown, there has also been rapid, deep integration.

And the bar I chose as a replacement for Juan's bar is proof. It is staffed by one Filipino and two Bangladeshis who run the gamut of local greetings as if they had been born here. "Hola, nena," they say, greeting everyone in Catalan slang.

In another bar, run by Chinese immigrants, the owner's children pester the customers for help with their Catalan homework. The customers do not seem to mind, this is after all their local neighbourhood bar. The centre of goings-on. "It's the global boom and bust, not the immigrants, threatening the Spanish way of life," an old man at the bar tells me. *And I have to agree.*



The BBC's M Ilyas Khan is one of the few journalists in recent months who has been able to travel to the remote north-western Pakistani tribal district of Kurram, where members of the Turi tribe are waging a war of attrition with the Taliban. "We hope to attract more than 200 families to this colony in a year's time," says thier leader. The idea is to boost Turi presence in an area that belongs to the tribe but where the population has thinned out.