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## Trip to the Holy Land

**By John Manos**

*It was over a year ago that we began planning a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the Cretans from Chicago and the Pancretan Association of America.*

*This was definitely a trip of a lifetime and one that has been on our bucket list for several years! My wife, Elena, and I kept waiting for the children to get a little older, then, as has been the case over the past several years, there was always something politically unsettling going on over there that deterred us from going. We finally decided that it was time to go before the years slipped away.*



*Upon overhearing discussions we had with our chapter president, Mr. George Kalergis, our friend Antoni Brillakis briefed us on his recent trips there with his wife Aglaia. He had been there 8 times over the past few years and had developed many contacts and a lot of experience traveling in that part of the world.*

*I spoke to Pancretan Association of America President John Sargetis and he agreed to endorse and announce our trip to the national PAA members and promote it at a national board meeting held last November in Chicago. Our group ended up being 28 people, with Cretans, family and friends from several states.*

*We all took off from Chicago with a connecting flight in Constantinople and then to our final destination in Tel Aviv. There, we were met by our travel agent Fotini Tazoglou of Titan Travel.*

*The itinerary that was sent to us weeks earlier was very busy and ambitious. It was put together for us by one of the top Archimandrites of the Patriarchate there, Father Aristovoulos. He was an amazing man, a great Archimandrite, and the most knowledgeable person there for the Holy Land sites. We started each morning at 7:00 a.m. and finished our day at 7:00 p.m. Our scheduled stops included cities and towns that I remember reading and learning about at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church and Socrates Greek School in Chicago! I could not believe that I was going to go and be at the birthplace of Jesus and the Holy Tomb of our Lord and Savior! We were going to walk where He walked and visit places where He spoke and where he performed the miracles that we read about in our bible!*

*On our first day, our first stop was at the Tomb of Lazarus, the actual tomb! We walked up the cobblestone street to find several people waiting in line. Most of them were Russian Orthodox. As we made our way down the steps and approached the entrance to the tomb, it became quieter and quieter. We walked down the narrow stone steps into the dark chiseled-out grave to see the place that, 2000 years ago, Jesus went and told Lazarus to rise and come out.*

*We stopped at the Monastery of Martha and Maria in Bethany where Christ stopped and rested on a stone before going into the tomb to raise Lazarus from the dead. The actual stone was there! I touched it and I prayed on it!*

*We went on to the Monastery of St. George of Chotzeva and to the Monastery of St. Fotini the Samaritan in Jacob's Well where we met an amazing monk from Kerkyra that shared the story of Jacob's well and he spoke to us of his lifelong commitment to the church there. It is amazing to hear what these people have gone and are still going*

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## St. Basil Church Re-opens After March 2013 Fire

Two years ago, a tremendous fire devastated the 105 year old, St. Basil Greek Orthodox Church of Chicago. By the grace of God, no one was injured. However, the fire, smoke, and water damage was considerable within the sanctuary. Icons were burned, stained glass windows destroyed, glass chandeliers melted, and a massive hole was opened in the dome, by firefighters, to permit the smoke to escape. Extensive damage also occurred



on the lower lever of the building, effecting the kitchen, offices, storage areas, fellowship hall, and possessions within.

The downstairs fellowship hall was restored within five weeks, and Sunday Liturgy resumed in the lower multi-purpose room. Unfortunately, the



structural and cosmetic repairs in the main church have been so vast. Work continues. Icons had to be restored and replaced, carpeting ordered, pews

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## NATIONAL HELLENIC FREE PRESS

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### THE PLATFORM OF THE GREEK PRESS

- 1.To applaud the achievements of our ethnic group
- 2.To support the ideas of the Hellenic-Christian tradition
- 3.To promote the preservation of the Greek language
- 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.

## Trip to the Holy Land

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through here. We then headed back to the hotel for dinner and some needed rest.

The next morning, we had the honor and privilege of meeting Metropolitan Eugeneos of Rethymno and Avlopotamou, along with Father Stamati from Heraklion,



Crete. They flew in from Crete to be here with us on our pilgrimage. He helped organize and coordinate our tour and entrance into these Holy places. He also coordinated our meeting with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch here in Jerusalem, Theophilos III.

We started our day together with the Metropolitan in the center of town and walked to one to the four entrances to get into the old city through its fortified walls. We made our way down the narrow cobblestone street that was full of shops, not unlike those you find in the tourist areas of Greece.

When we reached the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher I was shocked! It was not what I anticipated. It was not open, airy, and sprawled out but, instead, it was next to a mosque and a few blocks from the Jewish quarter, surrounded of old stone buildings and I couldn't see where the mountain of Golgotha was located.

When we walked in through the two massive doors the first thing right in front of us was the most Holy slab of stone of the "Apokathilosi". A sudden calm came over all of us and everyone became quiet and somber. We knelt and kissed the stone and prayed. I did not want to get up. I stayed there for some time until my wife told me that it was time to move on. I do not know but I must have been there for some time without realizing it. Of course here, as in all of these sites, the lines are massive. I knew we would be coming back here later in the evening, so I felt comfortable in leaving and anticipating seeing what was next.

We worked our way down the corridor to the Chapel of Mary Magdalene, the temporary prison of Christ, the Column of Thorns, the Chapel of Adam, and then worked our way down a flight of stairs to the actual spot where St. Helen found the cross on which Christ was crucified. The Romans had thrown it away here, in a dump, as they feared it and they did not want any evidence of it found. We kept walking and we finally reached a small church, in the center of the larger domed area. Here inside

## Trip to the Holy Land

was the cave that the Panagio Tafo is located. The lines were long leading into the tomb, so, we walked around and saw it from the outside and kept going since we knew that we would be coming back later to go inside to pray.

We began to work our way to the Patriarchate. We walked through the old city and were told that the Patriarchate owns a substantial amount of these properties were the ones that have control of the Holy Sepulcher and most of the Holy Sites. That is also the reason that their symbol is the "TF", which stands for Tafo Filakas! Our group was received by the Patriarch with open arms. Patriarch Theophilos



III of the Holy City of Jerusalem, Syria, Arabia, beyond the Jordan River, Cana of Galilee and Holy Zion was elected by the Holy Synod of Jerusalem as the 141<sup>st</sup> primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem in 2005 and confirmed by the Pan-Orthodox Synod of Constantinople. We spoke to Him about the goals and accomplishments of the PAA, our local chapter in Chicago, and that of Greek Americans in the U.S. He had been briefed on our organization and commented that He was proud of us for carrying on our religion, our faith, and our culture in America. The Patriarch stressed the importance of the Greek language: "The greatest enemy of a nation is the loss of its language. Without it's language it will forever lose its identity."

After our visit we returned to the streets of the old city through the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross, which followed the route that Christ took carrying the cross up to Golgotha.

We visited the Prison of Christ and were able to enter the actual small cave entering through the metal gate to a room approximately 6'x8'. A stone seat had been carved in the cave with two holes through it. Here Jesus' legs went through and His feet were chained together at the bottom. His arms were also chained on top of His head. We continued on with the Lithostrotos where the Judgment of Christ took place. The house of Nicodemus, the Prison of Peter, the pool of Bethesda, the Birthplace of Theotokos and then the tomb of where she is buried. Next were the Garden of Gethsimani and finally that day, at the location where Jesus said the last prayer.

That night at midnight we went back at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to attend the Midnight service. Again, as we entered we all fell to our knees in front of "Apokathilosi" and we worked our way up two flights of stairs to the top of Golgotha and the actual spot where Christ was crucified. We all knelt as we approached to venerate. As our group went through and made their way down to attend the liturgy in front of the chapel that holds the Panagio Tafo, I found myself not been able to move from there to follow the others down to the liturgy. After some time I felt my wife patting me on my shoulder. She didn't know what had happened to me as I was the only one that didn't make it downstairs.

She understood as she approached that I was okay and quietly told me where to find our group once I was ready to join them. As I stood there in deep prayer suddenly I heard the Xristos Anesti and decided to go down and partake in the service. As I made the turn I saw about a thousand people, mostly Orthodox Russians and about thirty Greek and Russian Priests, Bishops and Metropolitans participating in the liturgy in front of the chapel of The Panagio Tafo which went on till 4:00 a. m. Despite the presence of other Orthodox clergy, only a Greek Orthodox priest is allowed to conduct the liturgy. We had the honor of having our Metropolitan from Rethymno be the lead priest that evening. What an amazing liturgy it was and as you heard the Xristos Anesti in Greek and Russian you could feel the sound reverberate against the walls!

Even though it was close to 5:00 a.m. as we walked back through the little streets of the old city and made our way back to the bus, we were all wide awake and full of energy.

After a few hours of sleep we started our day with breakfast and off we were again. We started our day at Mount Sion, the place where the Last Supper was held, where King David's Tomb was, the place where the Theotokos died and where the Disciples came to pay their respects. Then we visited the Jewish Quarter and the Wailing Wall.

The afternoon was set aside for us to return to the Holy Sepulcher and go inside the Panagio Tafo. As our group waited in line and neared the entrance, the quieter we all became. We were all saying our prayers and I continued saying the Pater Imon over and over.

When our turn came, we entered three at a time at the direction of the monks stationed there whose objective was to move the visitors through so that the lines didn't become longer.

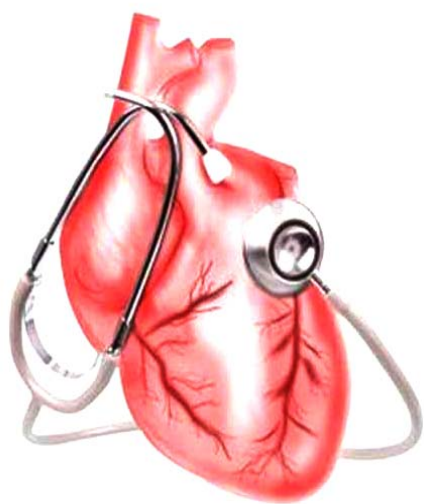
When we walked into the first room, we saw a piece of stone that was encapsu-

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## Study: Brushing Your Teeth Is Good For Your Heart

How could your dental and heart health ever be connected? Well, according to new research conducted in England, there is a rather strong connection between the ways you care for your pearly whites and your chance of suffering a heart attack.



The study, conducted by the Scottish Health Survey, examined over 11,000 individuals of all ages to identify a possible correlation between dental and heart health. Along with information on their dental bill of health, the subjects were asked to provide information about their other lifestyle habits, such as smoking, physical activity, and health routines.

Of the group, about 62 percent said they visited the dentist every six months, and another 71 percent said that they brushed their teeth twice a day. This information lead the researchers to conclude that those that admitted to brushing their teeth less frequently had an extra 70 percent risk of heart disease or heart attack.

"Our results confirmed and further strengthened the suggested association between oral hygiene and the risk of cardiovascular disease," says Richard Watt DDS from the University College London. According to the researchers, the results of the study were not entirely surprising, but rather confirmation of a decade-long hypothesis on the connection between dental diseases and cardiovascular health.

In yet another study conducted in the United States, it was found that as people's gum health improved, so did the rate at which plaque built up in their arteries. This study showed that the chances of contracting a dangerous condition called atherosclerosis, or the narrowing of the arteries around the heart, decreased when subjects brushed their teeth and had a clean bill of gum and oral health.

But scientifically, how are gum disease and heart disease connected? The bacteria that develops in your mouth when you have gum disease contributes to atherosclerosis in that it adds to the level of inflammation of the arteries and triggering a biological reaction that narrows space these important passage ways. Once you have atherosclerosis, your chances mild to certain that you will experience a heart attack and possibly even stroke

So the next time you worry about your visit to the dentist, or need a reason to floss your teeth, remember that caring for your oral and gum health properly could dramatically decrease your chances of heart disease and other serious conditions. Make brushing and flossing a regular habit, and you are sure to be on the way to a heart-healthy and happy self!

## St. Basil Church Re-opens After March 2013 Fire

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rebuilt and restored, and intricate gold leaf applied to the balcony and ceiling.

The design and restoration of the church is being led by John Regas, a Chicago-based interior designer. John is a member of the St. Basil parish and has done work on other Orthodox churches in Chicago and Florida. John's vision for the restored church is based on churches he has seen in visits to Greece's monastic peninsula of Mount Athos, a community of twenty-two monasteries in Northern Greece.

"It's only by God's providence that we've arrived at this day of our returning to our sanctuary entirely restored and renewed," noted Fr. Panteleimon Dalianis, the head priest at St. Basil Church. "This is a new chapter in our church's 105 year history, and we're certain that this is going to be a great chapter in that history. With the southwest corridor of Chicago booming, we feel that we're in the right place at the right time to minister to the needs of this community, and we pray that God will give us the wisdom and strength to carry out that commission."

"We're excited to be moving forward," noted Anthony Frankos, current parish council president at St. Basil Church. "Most people don't realize the amount of work that goes into a repair project of this size – it's been two years and three months in the making. But we're extremely positive. Things have come together well. And we want to thank all who have supported this project through their time, contributions and prayers. And especially our parish council and our fire repair committee members who have put in countless hours to bring this project to fruition."

The parish continued having services and maintained all of its ministries during the repair work. Divine worship was held in the downstairs multi-purpose room, Philoptochos Hall. To contribute to the work or for more information contact St. Basil church at 312-243-3738, or visit the website at [www.stbasilchicago.org](http://www.stbasilchicago.org).

Sophia Panousakis

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lated in a glass case in the middle of the room. That was the original stone that had closed the entrance to the Tomb. To proceed, you had to kneel down to walk into the next small room through a small opening, the actual Holy Tomb where His body was laid! You had to be on your knees most of the time as you could not stand up. The room was approximately 5' x 6' and included several icons, a few candles, and a carved out area where His body was laid. I was overcome with emotion. I tried to pray, but was at a loss. I wanted to cry, but could not. I kept looking around to take in as much as I possibly could so I could remember every single image, but I could not. Then, before I knew it, someone said it was time to move on as there were other people waiting. I was not ready, I was not done, and I needed to stay and say my prayers but did not. I came out and felt I was not done. I needed more time!



According to our guide, this feeling apparently is experienced by most of the people that go there. Fortunately, he added that we would have an opportunity to come back again before we left.

The next day we drove to the Monastery of St. Sabbas — a long drive, out in the desert where the monastery is built on the side of a mountain. It is a beautiful all-male monastery. From there, we stopped at the Monastery of Saint Theodosios and entered the cave where the three Wise Men rested on their way to Bethlehem. We met a Monk who was the uncle of a good friend of ours in Boston. We kept going, just like the Wise Men we also continued on to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The main church area was under construction but we were still able to go inside the little church in the basement level to the cave that Jesus Christ was born. Very small, here is where He was born! The manger just two steps away and two steps down. There was an altar with an Agia Trapeza just over the spot where He was born. We all went to our knees and prayed. Just outside the main church in the courtyard is the tomb of the infants killed by King Herod. They have actually saved the small bones and skulls here. After our time here, we went to the Monastery of Saint Symeon, the saint that gave Panagia and Holy Infant Jesus the forty day blessing and the house of Saint John the Baptist.

On our way back to the hotel some of us got off the bus at the old city and had the opportunity to go back to Panagio Tafo and to also visit the church of Agio Nikolao.

As it was our last night in Jerusalem we said goodbye to our Metropolitan Eugenios as he was heading back the next morning to Crete and we were off to the city of Tiberius.

The day started with a cable car ride up the mountain and then continued with a long climb up to the Monastery of Temptation where we actually saw the small cave and rock that Jesus stayed for 40 days. Here He was tempted by the devil three times. Our next stop was at the original baptismal site of Jesus, on the border of Israel and Jordan. At a small bend in the river where we stopped, we could literally walk across the other side of the river to Jordan! We all went in, some washed their face in the river, others just put their feet in, and others prayed. On the way back, we stopped at the Monastery of Saint Gerasimos and had the opportunity to ride a camel that, coincidentally was "parked" at the local gas station, out in the middle of nowhere! Our last stop for the day was at the Dead Sea. It did look dead, as it is full of salt with no life in it. You would not know it as the locals treated it as an ocean beach resort?! Its waters are supposedly good for your skin, and a few courageous from our group chose to go in for a swim.

Finally, after a two hour bus ride we arrived to Tiberius on the Ocean of Galilee.

After much needed rest and a good night sleep, our first stop the next day was to the Monastery of the Miracle of the Wine in Kana of Galilee, then to the city of Nazareth at the church of Annunciation where we drank the same water from the well that the Theotokos had come to get water from and the Angel appeared to her. From there, we went to the top of Mount Tabor to the Monastery of Transfiguration.

On our last day, we went to the Monastery of the Apostles in Capernaum. We had coordinated a liturgy and Artoklasia there for our group. We then took a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, went to the exact spot where Jesus recited the Lord's Prayer for the first time, then to Eptagpigon at the miracle of the multiplication.

Our day ended with a late lunch at a local tavern where we enjoyed whole fresh fish from the Sea of Galilee.

This was truly an amazing trip and one that will stay with all of us for a very long time. I cannot thank enough the PAA, the Cretan Fraternity of Chicago, and chapter president Mr. George Kalergis for their support, our tour coordinator and trip chairman Antoni and Aglaia Brillakis, our very dear friend and editor Mr. Sotiris Rekoumi (with his harmonica), and our family and friends that came with us. It was truly an incredible experience. I pray and hope that God

gives everyone the opportunity to go visit this most Holy Place!

As for Elena and me, we look forward to the day that we can return and re-live this amazing experience!





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## 40 Tips For a Better Life

Life is made up of good and bad lessons we accumulate along the way. In order to understand it, we must separate it into a few domains, each with its own lessons to teach us. This list of good advice was given by a group of people from all ages. So here are 40 great tips for a great life!

**Health** 1. Drink a lot of water 2. Eat your breakfast like kings, lunch like princes, and dinner like beggars 3. Eat more foods that grow on trees and plants and eat fewer foods made in factories 4. Live your life according to the three principle: Truth, Empathy and Energy. 5. Make time for contemplation and/or prayer 6. Involve more game playing in your life 7. Read more books than you read last year 8. Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes a day 9. Invest at least 7 hours of sleep every sleep 10. Take 10-30 minutes to walk somewhere each day. Smile while you walk. **Character** 11. Don't compare your lives to those of others. You have no idea what their journey actually looks like. 12. Don't waste time on negative thoughts or things you cannot change. Instead, divert your energy to a positive moment in the present. 13. Don't exaggerate in your actions, keep yourself in check. 14. You don't have to win **EVERY** argument. Agree to disagree. 15. Don't waste your energy gossiping. 16. Dream more while you're awake. 17. Envy is a waste of time. You may already have all you need, but if not, envy won't get it for you. 18. Forget past events and don't remind your partners of their past mistakes. It will ruin your present happiness. 19. Life's too short to hate people. Don't hate in vain. 20. Make peace with your past, or it will destroy you at present. 21. No one is responsible for your happiness but you. 22. Realize that life is a school and you're here to learn. Problems are just a part of learning, but the lesson they teach will be with you for life. 23. Smile more. Laugh more. 24. Don't take yourselves so seriously, no one else will! **Community** 25. Call your family often. 26. Every day give or do something good for another. 27. Forgive everyone, for everything. 28. Spend time with people over 80 and under 6 - it will teach you a lot. 29. Try to make at least three people smile, every day. 30. What other people think of you is none of your concern. 31. Your work won't take care of you when you're sick. Your family and friends will. Don't cut ties. Life 32. Do the right thing. It pays in the long-term. 33. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or brings you enjoyment. 34. When you are angry or upset, seek solitude before taking it out on the people around it. 35. Forgiveness heals all wounds. 36. No matter how good or bad the current situation is, it'll change. 37. The best is yet to come. 38. When you wake up alive in the morning, don't take it for granted - embrace it. 39. The secret of secrets in your heart is that you CAN be happy - so be happy. 40. Never forget to enjoy the time you have, the moment you are in, and the people that share these things with you!

## Geopolitical challenges

By Alexis Papachelas

You don't need to be Henry Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski to see that Greece is facing major geopolitical challenges. History has taught us that whenever Greece is experiencing a period of instability, Turkey takes advantage of this weakness to set a precedent. The Greeks were violently evicted from Asia Minor during a period of major turmoil in Greek politics. The end of the military dictatorship of 1967-1973 was followed by Turkey's occupation of northern Cyprus, and the handover of power from Andreas Papandreou to Costas Simitis came just before the Imia crisis in 1996.

Now Turkey is also in crisis. Its foreign policy has seen nothing but a string of failures, the mighty Recep Tayyip Erdogan is battered yet remains as arrogant as ever, and what will happen over the next few weeks is completely unpredictable.

To be fair, Ankara has not sought to take advantage of the Greek crisis so far. But in recent months it does seem to be testing the waters. It knows of Greece's weaknesses and also that Athens has spent all of its political capital on the debt negotiation

Athens needs to be extremely wary.

The Imia crisis taught us that the challenge is to avert an unnecessary escalation of tension without ceding sovereign rights. So far, it seems that we have learned our lesson but this does not mean that Greece can let it's guard down.

Turkey is not Greece's only concern. The wave of undocumented migrants is also a significant threat and one that is extremely difficult to control. It not only constitutes a major financial burden but it is also impossible to know whether there may be radical elements hiding among the thousands of people fleeing war and poverty.

Last but not least, there appears to be some strange plan underfoot from Turkey to infiltrate the Balkans, and Albania in particular, which cannot come to any good in the future.

All of these factors point to a power reshuffle in the region. The United States has all but withdrawn from the Eastern Mediterranean though the threat of jihadist terror is bringing it back in. Europe as a whole has no foreign policy to speak of and plays no real role on the geopolitical chessboard. Russia is trying to expand its sphere of influence in the Balkans and southern Europe but its alliances and plans have not yet matured.

So, it is in this framework and with a weakened state that Greece has to face its geopolitical challenges. The good news is that the country's foreign policy and defense stance has not changed much in recent years and there is some level of stability on these fronts. That, at least, shows that we have matured as a country in some respects.

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# NEWS FROM GREECE

## Hotel contracts with a ‘Greek default clause’

Conference organizers, tour operators seek protection in the event that the country goes bankrupt



After the drachma clauses seen in tourism contracts, foreign tour operators are now forcing hoteliers in Greece to sign contracts with a Greek default clause.

Foreign organizers of international conferences have been introducing default clauses to contracts forcing the non-payment of compensation in case the country defaults and they decide to cancel their events. That clause is reminiscent of insurance contracts which stop short of providing for compensation in case of natural disasters, acts of terrorism etc.

Kathimerini understands that already one conference organizer, who is to hold an event in this country with the participation of foreign delegates next month, has imposed a “default clause” on the hotel enterprise in order to sign a contract, sparing him from having to pay compensation for canceling the event if Greece defaults.

In the next couple of months hoteliers will, as usual, also have to sign the bulk of their 2016 contracts with representatives of foreign tour operators. Some operators have already told Greek hoteliers that they require extra safety clauses in case the country drops out of the eurozone.

Furthermore, the financial terms of contracts will depend on the planned value-added tax hikes on tourism. Hoteliers wonder on what terms they will be asked to sign the contracts, to what extent they can impose price hikes on tour operators and how they will retain their rates competitive in comparison with the hotel rates of other countries such as Turkey, Spain etc.

Representatives of tourism associations estimate that in the event more taxes are introduced, small and medium-sized hotel enterprises – which account for the majority of the country’s accommodation capacity – will see their negotiating position weakened against their foreign clients.

The possibility of a VAT hike in Greece has also generated interest in the country’s rivals. A Lesbos hotelier reported that Turkish peers keep asking about any news on a VAT increase on Greek tourism for 2016, saying that a significant price increase on the Greek tourism package would signify a direct advantage for the neighboring country’s tourism market.

## Listed firms have whisked away most of their cash reserves

Listed companies have felt compelled to whisk their cash reserves abroad as the liquidity shortage increases uncertainty among local entrepreneurs.

Kathimerini has discovered that 85 percent of the cash reserves of the 233 Athens-listed firms, i.e. over 9 billion euros, has in the last seven months been forwarded to other countries, with the rest spread evenly across the four Greek systemic lenders.

The majority of the funds are controlled by 40 large- and mid-caps, while the total level of cash reserves was estimated at 10.9 billion euros in end-2014.



“We need to minimize the unforeseeable consequences from possible capital controls,” a company owner told Kathimerini, “as we never expected we’d be in May without a decision on the country’s funding.”

## EU defends Juncker's 'cool style'

Aides to European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker went to his defence Tuesday for shirking protocol when he greeted leaders at an EU summit last week, saying he was known for his “cool style.”



At the opening of the Riga summit on Friday, a light-hearted and tactile Juncker kissed leaders on the head, fiddled with their ties, saluted, and slapped them not just on the back but also on the stomach, chest and face.

“He’s known for his very informal and often cool style,” Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas told reporters, triggering laughter.

He added that Juncker, a 35-year veteran of the European political scene, “knows personally and very well” all the leaders with whom he has a relationship of “mutual trust”.

Juncker also teased Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban over his strongman reputation, jokingly greeting him as “dictator”.

Orban replied: “Hello Grand Duke,” a reference to Juncker’s native Luxembourg, known as the Grand Duchy even though it is one of the smallest countries in the world.

Schinas declined to comment on what Juncker, a former prime minister of Luxembourg, really thought of Orban’s policies.

The right-wing Orban has infuriated his EU peers for years, carrying out sweeping constitutional and institutional changes that critics say have curbed press freedom and judicial authority.

Most recently Orban has stirred controversy by proposing to debate reintroducing the death penalty, which is banned through-

out the EU, in Hungary.

Among his more striking greetings, Juncker slapped Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn hard on the cheek, kissed Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel on his bald head, and stretched his tie over the tie-less neck of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

He also wondered aloud about the identity of visitors and complained of wasting his time during the greeting ceremony.

“It was the fun part of a very long and boring welcome process,” Schinas said.

Juncker is known to use his sense of humour and frankness to achieve compromise in the EU, but his behaviour has triggered accusations that he has a penchant for alcohol, which he denies.

He assumed his role as head of the commission, the executive of the 28-nation EU, in November 2014 after his conservative EPP bloc won the European elections. [AFP]

## Gennimata easily beats off competition to become first woman to head PASOK

Fofi Gennimata took over as the first female leader in PASOK’s history on Monday after comfortably seeing off her two male competitors to secure the presidency of the beleaguered Socialist party.

The ex-minister immediately said that she would seek to rebuild the once-mighty party and would begin a dialogue with other groups on the center-left of Greek politics. Although she did not name them, her comments suggest that she will reach out to Democratic Left, which was part of the coalition government between 2012 and 2013, and the Movement of Democratic Socialists launched by ex-PASOK chief George Papandreou in January.

PASOK was founded in September 1974 by a group of socialists that included Gennimata’s father but has not been led by a woman before. The new



Socialist chief is expected to call a meeting of PASOK’s parliamentary group during the week and will also start the process needed to elect new officials to key posts in the party.

Despite competition from another ex-minister, Andreas Loverdos, and the younger MP Odysseas Constantino-poulos, Gennimata managed to pass the 50 percent mark she needed to win from the first round of voting and avoid a run-off ballot with the second-placed candidate. Some 53,000 PASOK members voted on Sunday and Genimata garnered 51.7 percent.

The new PASOK chief is due to meet Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Tuesday morning in her first official duty since taking over at the helm.

Tsipras also has a morning meeting with Potami chief Stavros Theodorakis, who held talks Monday with President Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

Theodorakis asked for a meeting of political leaders to be called but the request must come from Tsipras. The president’s role means that Pavlopoulos can host such a meeting but cannot convene it himself.

## Tsipras refuses to give ground in halted talks

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras is due to speak to SYRIZA MPs on Monday amid growing pressure from lenders to accept their proposal for breaking a deadlock in bailout talks, which the Greek leader has so far refused to consider.

SYRIZA’s parliamentary group is due to convene at 1 p.m. Tuesday in the wake of talks between a Greek delegations and representatives of the country’s lenders failing to achieve a breakthrough in Brussels over the weekend. Before speaking to his lawmakers, Tsipras is due to meet the new PASOK leader, Fofi Gennimata, To Potami chief Stavros Theodorakis and New Democracy deputy Dora Bakoyannis.

Ahead of these meetings, Tsipras remained defiant Monday. He issued a statement saying that his government would not give in to demands for pension cuts. “One can only suspect political motives behind the institutions’ insistence that new cuts be made to pensions despite five years of pillaging by the memoranda,” the prime minister said in his statement.

“We will patiently wait for the institutions to adhere to realism. This is not a matter of ideological stubbornness. This is about democracy,” said Tsipras.

His comments were echoed by spokesman Gavriil Sakellaris in his regular press briefing. “We have largely reached our limits,” he said, adding that the country’s lenders would have to show a willingness to compromise before Athens could offer any more concessions.

Despite the breakdown of the Brussels discussions, the Greek proposals leaked by Kathimerini showed that Athens has now accepted the lenders’ primary surplus targets of 1 percent of GDP for this year and 2 percent of GDP in 2016. Where there are still major differences is in the adjustments needed to value-added tax and cuts to pensions in order to hit those targets.

The Greek delegation left Brussels on Sunday with a difference of 1.2 billion euros in the amount of measures needed for this year alone. However, Greece’s lenders insist that they have backed down on fiscal targets to help secure a deal.

“It’s not a one-way street,” European Commission spokesperson Annika Breidthardt told a press conference. “The concessions... made and the flexibility that has been shown are already quite substantial.”

Breidthardt said the institutions are seeking savings of 1.8 billion euros per year from pension reform, whereas the Greek proposals for phasing out early retirement would lead to savings of just 71 million euros.

The distance between the Athens and its creditors following the weekend, and ahead of a Eurogroup meeting on Thursday, has led to further speculation about what might happen if Greece fails to secure an agreement by the end of the month and defaults.



# The Mind Diet: Eating for the Health of Your Brain

Diet and nutrition may play an influential part when it comes to the health of your brain. Researchers believe that nutrition can play a role in preventing the brain from shrinking as people age. Recent studies observed that older adults who followed a Mediterranean diet showed higher brain volume than their peers who followed other diets.

The Mind diet, developed by Martha C Morris at th Rush Medical Center in Chicago, is a combination of the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet (dietary approaches to stop hypertension). This progressive diet merges the healthy practices of both eating plans to help benefit the brain.



This new super-diet recommends plenty of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. It advises whole grains over refined ones, moderate amounts of wine (a glass or two per day) and emphasizes fish, poultry and seeds. The diet discourages saturated fats, added sugars and salt. There is little dairy, eggs and red meat included, and plenty of olive oil.

This eating style can reduce inflammation and plaque buildup in the brain. Inflammation has been linked to Alzheimer’s and other chronic diseases. Foods such as olive oil, grapes, berries, plums, apricots, leafy green vegetables and walnuts have been observed to reduce plaque buildup in the brain.

The Mind diet also favors anti-inflammatory foods and cuts out inflammatory foods. For example, omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, seeds, nuts, and olive oil are anti-inflammatory.

Alzheimer’s has also been called “type 3 diabetes” by some researchers. Diets high in sugar increase the risk of developing diabetes, which in turn increases the risk for Alzheimer’s. The Mind diet recommends cutting out added sugars altogether. An additional contributor to developing Alzheimer’s is oxidative stress. This is when the immune system can’t stop the damaging effects of toxins that enter or develop in the body. There is evidence that diets rich in antioxidant foods combat oxidative stress. The Mind diet recommends foods like blueberries and spinach, which are rich in antioxidants.

The Mind diet also advocates herbs and spices, another source of lowering inflammation and oxidative stress. Research suggests that cinnamon reduces brain plaque while a daily dose of 30g saffron is as effective at fighting Alzheimer’s symptoms as the prescription drug donepezil. Turmeric was also found to be good at combating inflammation and oxidative stress.

Scientists are looking at all healthy habits that prevent a decline in thinking skills, such as the long-term effect of exercise on brain function. Many researchers believe the prevention of cognitive decline includes a combination of diet, mental and physical exercise, sleep, and social engagement.

# Draghi distances ECB from negotiations' halt tension

European Central Bank President Mario Draghi (c) warned on Monday that the situation in Greek banks is ‘in evolution,’ with the current liquidity support from the Eurosystem at 66 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, or 118 billion euros.



Speaking to the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, Draghi said that this is the highest support ever granted to any eurozone country.

He reiterated the ECB would continue to support Greek banks as long as they remained solvent and had sufficient collateral, thereby distancing himself from the recent tension between Athens and its creditors.

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