

Greece vow to turn fire-ravaged Ancient Olympia into exemplary green development model

ATHENS. - Greek new Prime Minister George Papandreou announced Sunday the transformation of the birthplace of the Olympic Games and the surrounding area which was fire-ravaged in 2007, into an exemplary model of modern green development.

Accompanied by a group of five ministers, Papandreou visited Ancient Olympia and the Iliia prefecture, in his first tour as a prime minister, as he had promised before the October 4 elections.

Papandreou held an open discussion with local authorities in the town hall on the bill his party intends to submit in parliament for the "reconstruction of the area which will be used as a model for the restructure of whole Greece" as he stressed.

Ruling PASOK had submitted to the parliament a draft law in 2007, but it was rejected by the previous conservative New Democracy government.

Greek prime minister chose



renowned architect Josep Anton Acebillo as a chief advisor in the project. Acebillo helped transform Barcelona from an old and decaying city into one of the most vital cities in Europe before the 1992 Olympics.

The transformation of Olympia into a modern exemplary residential and green area includes the establishment of a new School of Sport, Olympics, Culture and Model Development. Visitors of the birthplace of the Olympic Games in the

future will admire anew Olympic Sports Center and the International Olympic Truce Foundation.

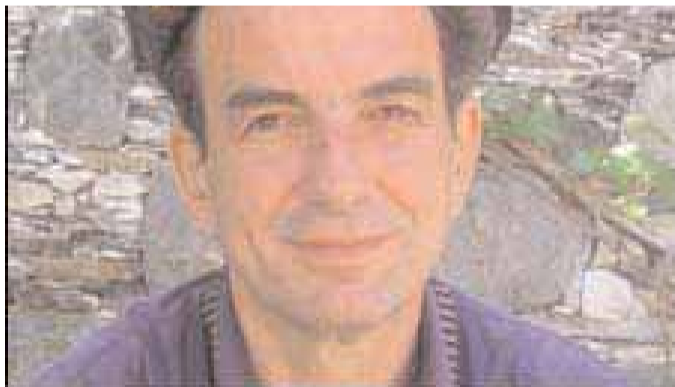
The project will be implemented by the Greek state with the mobilization of funds at international level on a basis of institutional changes. "The aim is to change the relationship between state and citizen. The state will be your advisor, your partner, your supporter in a joint effort that we have to improve living conditions, welfare, the prospects of this country," Papandreou said.

Abducted Greek volunteer appeals to Pakistan for his release

Abducted Greek volunteer Athanassios Lerounis has made a dramatic appeal to Pakistan's government to arrange his release and safe return to Greece, in a hand-written letter dated October 2, according to reports in local newspapers.

Lerounis, a Greek volunteer working with the Kalash tribe near the Pakistani border, was abducted by masked Taliban on September 8, during an attack on his home in a local village.

The hand-written note in English bears his signature and says that his life is in



danger unless Pakistani authorities accept the terms set by his abductors for his release - namely a ransom of 20,000 dollars and the release of three Taliban leaders held in Pakistan.

According to the local

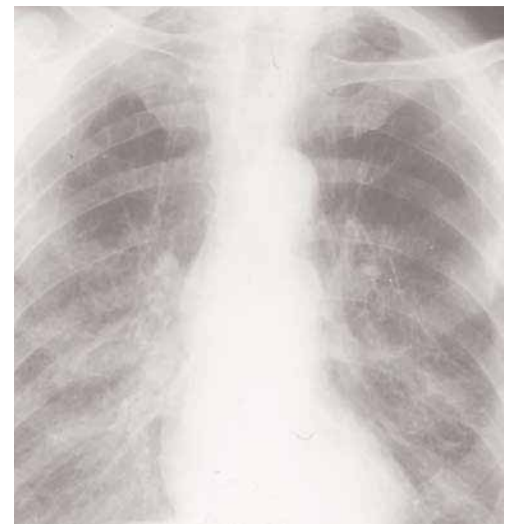
"Chitral Times", a delegation of local Muslim leaders from the Mumuret Valley has twice visited the region of Nuristan in neighbouring Afghanistan, where Lerounis is being held hostage, in order to negotiate the Greek volun-

teer's release but has so far returned empty handed.

During the last visit, it brought back three letters written by Lerounis: one to Pakistan's government, one to the Greek ambassador in the country and one to the non-governmental organisation "Greek Volunteers" that he worked for until he was kidnapped. A third attempt to meet the kidnappers is being arranged but it is unknown when this will take place.

In his letters to the ambassador and the NGO, Lerounis said that he was in good health, at least at the time they were written, and that he was being held by the Taliban who had informed him of their terms for his release.

He also noted his work as a volunteer among the Kalash since 1995, saying that he had participated in projects benefiting poor Pakistanis and that the Pakistani Embassy in Athens was well acquainted with the activities of the Greek Volunteers in Pakistan.



World's first fatty tissue stem cell transplant into lung of pulmonary fibrosis patient carried out in Alexandroupolis

A pioneer transplant of stem cells from fatty tissue to the lung of a 65-year-old patient suffering from pulmonary fibrosis, the world's first such operation, took place at the Alexandroupolis University Hospital's Pulmonary Clinic with a bronchoscopy procedure and only local anaesthesia, and required just 10 minutes.

The patient, who had been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis 2 1/2 years ago, underwent liposuction three months ago at a private hospital in Athens in order to isolate stem cells from the fatty tissue removed. Following a required quality check by the National Research Foundation's Primordial Cells Bank, a portion of the stem cells was administered to the patient intravenously. Three months after the first administration, the patient's condition had stabilised, while a marginal improvement was also recorded, Thrace's Democritus University pulmonology professor Dr. Demosthenes Bouros told.

Prof. Bouros added that, in order to achieve better results, the patient was administered the stem cells a second time on October 8, again via bronchoscopy, this time directly into the patient's lung.

He explained that the first administration was carried out intravenously because that was the only known procedure at that time. But the surgeons at the Alexandroupolis University Hospital decided to conduct the second administration directly into lung, for the first time in the world, in order to achieve better results.

The patient left for his home in Athens after the second procedure, and the results of the surgery were expected over the next six months.

Some five million people worldwide are afflicted with pulmonary fibrosis, the prognosis for which is death within 3-5 years, similar to that for lung cancer. Patients die either from the disease itself, which causes respiratory deficiency and failure, or from related complications such as pulmonary hypertension, bacterial infections and lung cancer.

The cause of the disease, which causes progressive scarring of lung tissue, is unknown, although risk factors include smoking, gastroesophageal reflux, various viral infections, and exposure to chemical substances, dust, and heavy metals.

Couples divorce as jobs, cash go

UNEMPLOYMENT anxiety is driving more Australians into relationship counselling and is likely to see the nation's divorce rate spike, a report warns.

Anglicare's annual State of the Family report has warned family relationships are coming under pressure not only when jobs are lost, but also when people fear they might lose their job, The Courier-Mail reports. "The effects of such insecurity can be as great as if the individual was unemployed," the report says. According to the survey of 1650 families, more than one in five had been unable to pay gas, electricity or water bills on time, 15 per cent had sought financial help from friends or family, and one in 10 had pawned or sold goods to get some cash. Eight per cent had been unable to pay their rent or mortgage on time, and 4 per cent went without meals.