

Greece appoints foreign experts

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou has named a team of foreign academics and political advisers to streamline his government as it battles an unprecedented financial crisis, his office says.



The list includes a Harvard professor on public policy, a former strategy adviser of Britain's ex-prime minister Tony Blair, a former Swedish industry minister, and the general secretary of Australia's lawyer-general.

The foreign experts will be

part of a committee "to modernise the government's operation", Papandreou's office said on Wednesday.

US-born Papandreou,

whose Socialists came to power in October, is on a mission to eliminate chronic graft and mismanagement that have plagued Greek

public finances for decades, eating up millions of euros and discouraging investment initiative, particularly from abroad.

Currently mired in recession, Greece is under severe pressure from the European Union to put its finances in order after a controversy over its official figures alarmed markets and eroded the value of the euro.

Greece's debt stands at more than 294 billion euros (\$A463.28 billion), its deficit is well beyond EU limits of three per cent of output for eurozone members and it suffered a triple downgrade of its sovereign debt in December.

Article from Sydney Morning Herald



Greek President Karolos Papoulias wins second term

Greek President Karolos Papoulias has been re-elected for a second term, as both main parties backed him for the sake of political stability.

The 80-year-old won 266 votes in the 300-seat parliament, with support from both ruling socialists and opposition conservatives.

Failure to reach agreement would have forced a parliamentary election.

Mr Papoulias urged his country to unite to overcome the debt crisis putting it under huge international pressure.

"A fair, strong and efficient state can overcome the current situation and open better avenues for Greece," he said.

The president's role in Greece is largely ceremonial, with limited powers.

Trees 'grow faster due to global warming'



FORESTS could be growing faster now than they were 225 years ago as a result of global warming, a study has revealed.

The study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found evidence that trees in the eastern United States were growing at an accelerated rate due to the rising levels of atmospheric CO₂, higher temperatures and longer growing seasons.

Scientists in Maryland, VA documented changes to the growth of 55 plots of mixed hardwood forest over 22 years, and concluded the younger trees were growing much quicker than the eldest trees in the study, which were 225-years-old, a Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) blog reported yesterday.

Forest ecologist Geoffrey Parker of the SERC and Sean McMahon of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute discovered that, on average, the forest was growing an additional two tonnes per acre annually, the equivalent of a tree with a diameter of two feet sprouting up over a year.

The scientists agreed that if the older trees had grown at the same rate throughout their lives as the younger trees were now, they would be much larger.

Mr Parker began his tree census work September 8, 1987, and measured all trees that were 2cm or more in diameter, and then identified their species. By knowing the species and diameter, he was able to calculate the trees biomass.

During the past 22 years CO₂ levels at SERC rose 12 per cent, the temperature increased by nearly three-tenths of a degree Celsius and the growing season lengthened by 7.8 days. Mr Parker and Mr McMahon suggested that a combination of these factors caused the forest's accelerated biomass gain.

50 years migration in Germany

The desire for joint, coordinated action, with the conviction that success is a viable target, with expressed by all participants in a symposium organised in Munich by the Doryforos Association, entitled: "Greeks of Germany: Different approaches, same targets".

The symposium was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the start of migration by Greeks and other foreign nationals to Europe, and especially to Germany.

"We aim to examine in a realistic way the different approaches to open issues that concern us", said the organising committee's coordinator, a second-generation Greek, Costas Tatsis. "Irrespective of the different approaches to the diverse issues, it is an important success that for the first time, the various bodies, institutions and individuals (professionals, artists, journalists) are all participating".



(source: voice of greece)

So Greek: Confessions of a Conservative Leftie by Niki Savva

After more than two decades as one of Australia's most senior political journalists (and a left-leaning one at that), in 1998 Niki Savva 'crossed over to the dark side' and became Peter Costello's press secretary. After six years, she moved to John Howard's cabinet policy unit. So Greek is her often funny, always opinionated take on those years, and the power play and shenanigans of Australia's political media. Savva includes her own migrant family story, which doesn't marry well with the political material, but goes some distance towards explaining her motivations and attitudes-liberal on social policy, conservative on economic policy. The book is strongest when exploring Savva's relationships with politicians like Paul Keating (which soured after she broke the 'recalcitrant' Mahathir story), Howard (in the '80s she ridiculed his 'wayward caterpillar' eyebrows, in 2007 she hugged him after his election loss), and especially Costello. Savva was the person who softened his image-buying him jeans, nagging him to ditch the smirk and, in 1998, telling him to give One Nation last preference in Higgins. That's all history, but the game continues. This is a great book for students of politics and the media, and for lovers of scuttlebutt everywhere.

