

# NewsTrack

## Watercooler Stories

United Press International Newstrack

Denmark approves lower pay for smokers

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Jan. 24 (UPI) -- Denmark's employment minister has approved allowing companies to pay smokers less than non-smokers to make up for higher healthcare costs.

Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen said he reviewed the law, and determined the policy did not violate the country's anti-discrimination laws, as smokers were not named as a group that was ensured equal rights.

"This is wildly grotesque," said Ole Stavad, a member of Parliament and former economy minister. "This means that you can also pay women a lower wage, as they also tend to have more sick days than men."

One Danish company, Jumbo Scaffolding, pays smokers an extra \$80 per month if they quit smoking, the Copenhagen Post reported Monday. The company's policy came from a 2002 company strategy to reduce sickness and healthcare costs among its employees.

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Cop allegedly threatens referee with DUI

INDIANAPOLIS, Jan. 24 (UPI) -- An Indianapolis police supervisor who coaches a sixth-grade basketball team is under investigation for allegedly threatening to arrest a referee.

Shawn Shafer said that Sgt. Michael Elder told him he would have him arrested for drunken driving, the Indianapolis Star reported. Shafer was referee of a game that Elder's team lost by nine points. He said Elder also bumped him with his chest.

Information on the incident was reported to the Police Department's internal affairs department.

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Italian adventurer halfway across Sahara

CAIRO, Jan. 24 (UPI) -- Italian adventurer Stevani Miglietti hopes to complete a 344-mile trek across the Sahara -- the first person to cross the region on foot.

Miglietti is due at the Siwa oasis in Egypt to complete his crossing of the Great Sand Sea, an area so harsh, it's avoided by Tuareg desert nomads, the Italian news agency ANSA reports.

Miglietti, 37, lugged a 200-pound cart stocked with food and water for the crossing. He had a 7-day supply.

"The mystery surrounding this journey has always fascinated me," said Miglietti before he set off Friday. "Everyone tells me it's practically impossible. But I don't have to prove anything to anyone but myself, so I'll have a go."

Miglietti, a former skier and mountaineer, planned to walk as much as 20 hours a day. He called his wife Monday by satellite phone to say he had completed half the journey.

"He's thinking about ditching his cart, putting his remaining supplies into a ruck sack and starting to run," she told ANSA.

In 2003, Miglietti became the first man to cross the Murzuq desert in Libya and set a record in 2005 for crossing the Yukon Arctic Ultra.