

# Waste units pollute Thermaic Gulf

“Streams of pollution” are gushing into the Thermaic Gulf daily due to the inadequate operation of biological wastewater treatment plants in the Thessaloniki area, a study by the northern city’s Aristotle University has revealed.

According to the 600-page study, which took experts at the university’s pollution-monitoring laboratory two years to complete, the Thermaic Gulf is being polluted by seven key sources.

Among the main offenders are local wastewater treatment plants, whose purpose, ironically, is to cleanse water.

The results of the study, commissioned by the government, were made public at a joint press conference yes-

terday by Macedonia-Thrace Minister Margaritis Tzimas and by Constantinos Fytianos, the chemist who led the research project.

The study mentions more than 30 proposals for improving the operation of local wastewater management and cleansing the polluted gulf.

According to Fytianos and his fellow researchers, action must be taken immediately to upgrade the operation of processing plants in Angelohori, on the east coast, and the city’s main sewage processing plant, on the west coast near the Gallikos River. The sewage unit alone processes some 160,000 cubic meters of waste every day. This is “theoretically a full second-stage biological processing procedure,”

according to the report, which noted concern “at the presence of phosphoric acid in the processed sewage as well as high levels of bacteria.”

This toxic waste was found to be particularly concentrated around the area of Kalohori. Tests revealed high traces of heavy metals, including lead, chromium and copper. They also discovered traces of pesticides that have been banned in Greece for years.

Last month, the Environment and Public Works Ministry heralded a project for the reuse of hundreds of tons of wastewater that is discharged daily from a sewage processing unit on the islet of Psyttaleia, off Piraeus. The water would be purified before being used for irrigation, the ministry said.

# Mobster shot dead in mafia-style Athens hit

One of Greece’s most notorious protection racketeers was shot dead early on Saturday morning by two gunmen on a motorbike that pulled up next to his car at traffic lights, police said. Alekos Kosmopoulos, 47, was linked to a high-profile bloody battle between underworld figures in the late 1980s and was convicted of the murder of a former associate a few years later.

Police said that Kosmopoulos resumed his criminal activities after being released from jail, but over the past few years had maintained a much lower profile. In view of this, officers believe that his murder is likely to have been a settling of old scores or a contract killing.

Police said that two gunmen shot Kosmopoulos several times before riding off. No description of the suspects was issued by late last night.

# Illegal immigrants become trapped in limbo in Greece

## EU pact will worsen situation for newcomers

*PATRAS – The West’s war against the Taliban drove Khalid Mohamed from his home. But his search for asylum in Europe has left him trapped in a shanty town in Greece, ignored by the government and abused by police.*



Greece’s western port of Patras has become a frontier for Europe’s unwanted migrants. Hundreds of Afghans live crammed into dirty shacks in a slum overlooked by plush apartment blocks, hoping to stow away aboard a ferry bound for Italy, where asylum conditions are easier.

For Mohamed, who fled central Afghanistan last year after losing friends and family in the war, it is a prison camp. He is caught in a limbo without papers or rights – forbidden to stay in Greece but prevented from leaving.

It is a situation human rights campaigners say illustrates a deepening chaos at the heart of the European Union’s migration policy.

“We never came here to be in prison. We came to be free,” said 28-year-old Mohamed, as his five roommates huddle around a bubbling hookah. Mohamed, who worked as a United Nations translator in Afghanistan, has a receipt for his asylum request but

has lost hope of being accepted: “Life here’s miserable. We’ve nothing.”

Greece is a new front line for immigration in Europe. As Spain and Italy have cracked down on migrants from the Middle East and Africa, those arrested by Greece rose to 112,000 last year from 40,000 in 2005, many of these from countries at war.

In Patras, Afghan men in dirty T-shirts live in shacks cobbled together from bits of wood and draped in plastic sheets, with a communal shower and no electricity. Skin and respiratory diseases are rife, but going to a hospital risks arrest.

One man has an arm in a cast, another has a bandaged leg – injuries from police beatings, they say. Medical volunteers at the camp say they often treat victims of police abuse, including a

man with a broken jaw last week, but the Interior Ministry said it was unaware of any problem.

“These people come thinking Europe is a haven for human rights but we treat them like animals,” said Marcella Tommasi, head of a Doctors Without Borders (MSF) center in Patras. Greece’s treatment of migrants is, says the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR, among the toughest in the 27-nation bloc. It accepted just 0.6 percent of 25,113 asylum applicants in 2007, a disturbingly low rate according to UNHCR.

A new EU pact, approved last month, may worsen the illegal migrants’ situation. The brainchild of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the nonbinding deal urges states to tighten external borders, increase repatria-

tions and attract skilled migrants.

A separate EU directive allows illegal migrants to be held for up to 18 months. “It’s not humane to hold people for 18 months,” said Tommasi. “And it won’t stop them from coming.”

# Officers raid betting shop

State gaming company OPAP showed yesterday just how determined it is to retain its monopoly on the gambling market in Greece, as police raided the Athens premises of a UK-based sports betting group, Stanleybet, following complaints by the Greek company.

OPAP alleged that Stanleybet set up two betting shops, in Athens and Thessaloniki, illegally, as it had no license to do so. Under Greek law, OPAP is the only gaming company allowed to accept bets. Police arrested two people in the Athens shop – the manager and a 20-year-old student who was placing a bet. The latter was released after questioning. Officers also confiscated more than 5,000 euros in cash and office equipment.

# Fan’s death trial ends, verdict due next week

A judge wrapped up the trial of 27 people who have been charged with various crimes in connection to the death of a Panathinaikos fan, Michalis Filopoulos, during a brawl near Athens in March 2007.

The trial lasted several weeks and judge Epameinondas Vrakatselis is expected to issue his ruling on Wednesday. Yesterday, he heard one of the Olympiakos supporters charged with Filopoulos’s death try to distance himself from a mobile phone video that showed him standing over the dead man’s body and shouting obscenities. The fan, Vassilis Psikakos, told the judge that he was swearing at others in order to scare them away as he did not want Filopoulos, who had been beaten and stabbed, to be attacked any further. The explanation led to an angry reaction from Filopoulos’s father, who had to be escorted from the courtroom.