

HIV infections on the ascent

Health Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos yesterday said AIDS "remained a threat to public health" as statistics showed that the number of Greeks infected with the HIV virus that can lead to AIDS is higher than it has been in nearly a decade.

"AIDS is not a nightmare which has passed, it is not something we can push to the back of

our minds," Avramopoulos said, stressing the importance of avoiding complacency ahead of World AIDS Day on December 1.

According to the Hellenic Center for Infectious Diseases Control (KEEL), there were 547 new cases of HIV in the first 10 months of this year. Experts at KEEL believe that this figure will exceed the number of new

cases recorded in 2005 and 2006, 565 and 572 respectively, and might become the highest since 2000. There was no figure for new HIV cases in 2007, when the spread of the virus is believed to have stabilized. About four in 10 (43 percent) of new HIV infections are believed to have been contracted through gay sex.

Greek parliament delegation visit to Hungary

VIENNA- The excellent level of Greek-Hungarian relations was reaffirmed during talks that members of a visiting foreign affairs and defence Parliamentary committee held in Budapest this week.

The interest shared by Greece and Hungary in the western Balkan states' Euro-Atlantic progress was also underlined.

The Greek parliamentary delegation, headed by committee president Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, began a two-day formal visit to Hungary on Tuesday.

Additionally, talks focused on prospects of Serbia's EU accession, regarded as a significant step for regional stability and economic growth.

The two sides agreed that there is room for closer bilateral cooperation in different sectors.

The Hungarian side also expressed support towards efforts for a peaceful and viable solution to the Cyprus problem, while the Greek delegation expressed appreciation for Hungary's support over the FYROM "name issue".

The Greek delegation attended the formal opening of the exhibition "Symposium on Ancient Macedonia", organised at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest.

Pianist and ensemble join forces for unique concert

AMAR QUARTETT AND EVANGELOS SARAFIANOS PERFORMED IN ATHENS



The Swiss Amar Quartett is named after the historic quartet founded by composer Paul Hindemith in 1922 and is particularly fond of the German composer's work. Pianist Sarafianos is especially popular in Japan.

Very interesting musical meeting will take place at the Athens Concert Hall tonight. Skilled pianist Evangelos Sarafianos will join forces with a distinguished music ensemble, the Amar Quartett, for a unique concert.

Both the pianist and the ensemble are based in Switzerland, where they are very popular. «It was an unavoidable meeting,» said Sarafianos on a phone interview. «The Amar Quartett is one of the best-known string quartets in Switzerland.»

Hindemith inspiration

The ensemble was named after the

historic quartet founded by composer Paul Hindemith in 1922. The quartet is particularly fond of the work of Hindemith, one of the top 20th-century German composers, and has recorded numerous of his compositions. It is keen on promoting contemporary music works, many of which are commissions of famous and lesser-known composers.

It further specializes in productions that combine chamber music with theater, ballet and multimedia performances. It has received various international awards, such as the Bubenreuth, the Graz, the Migros-Kulturprozent, the Geneva and the London Millennium Award and has performed in top concert halls around Europe.

Along with Sarafianos, the ensemble

will interpret Haydn's «String Quartet Op 77, No 1» as well as Brahms's and Cesar Franck's piano quintets. «The two quintets are huge works; each of them is a concert in itself,» said Sarafianos, who studied at the Athens Conservatory before moving on to the Basel Music Academy.

«I came to Switzerland almost by chance,» he said. «There was a friend, I won a scholarship and the plan was to return to Greece at some point. But I ended up staying and working here.» The Greek pianist's reputation has reached as far as Japan, a country to which he returns every year to give recitals and master classes and where in 1997 he received a rare honorary title.

«During the past decade I have traveled to Japan about 30 times and I have done eight different tours. The Japanese market is difficult, given that they have excellent musicians. Asia in general has produced some great soloists over the past few years, but it seems that from the start they saw something different in me, something that they liked. The chemistry was mutual.»

He said he misses Greece a lot. «I love Greece very much and I am very interested in this country. That is where my memories and where my people are. By now things are also happening in Greece, it's not what it was like when I left, 25 years ago.»

Foreign national wanted by Interpol arrested in Thessaloniki

A 44-year-old Albanian, wanted by Interpol on a Red Notice issued against him after being found guilty of killing two people and injuring another in his country, has been arrested in Thessaloniki.

The man was found guilty of multiple counts of manslaughter by an Albanian court but he had managed to flee to Greece, police announced.

Proceedings for his extradition to Albania have

already been instituted by the prosecutor's office.

Red Notices can only be issued by Interpol at the request of member countries and only if they are supported by national arrest warrants.

