

Recycling to get injection of cash, bins

The Environment and Public Works Ministry yesterday pledged to pay for 5,500 new blue recycling bins to be placed around Athens and other cities in the next few months plus a further 20,000 bins within the next two years in a bid to meet European Union standards on recycling.

Of the initial 5,500 bins, 2,000 will be set up in Athens, 1,500 in Piraeus, 1,000 in Thessaloniki and the remaining 1,000 in other parts of Attica and on the island of Icaria, the ministry said.

The government also plans to launch a new scheme aimed at compensating local authorities for recycling large volumes of trash. Each authority would

receive funding proportionate to the amount of trash gathered per resident per year. A proposed target for local authorities is for each resident to recycle between 20 and 25 kilos of garbage per year.

The ministry's aim is to triple the volume of household trash collected for recycling per year so that it reaches 200,000 tons in 2011, from 68,000 tons in 2007. Another target is to increase the number of blue recycling bins to 100,000 from 52,000 by the same deadline.

Minister Giorgos Souflias said these targets were achievable. «We have already managed to quadruple recy-

cling levels since 2004,» Souflias said, noting that the volume of trash recycled last year accounted for 25 percent of total trash volume compared to a rate of 6 percent in 2004.

It is unclear whether the government's compensatory scheme for local authorities will run alongside another one being organized by local authorities in Athens that aims to reward citizens who recycle their trash with coupons entitling them to discounts at supermarkets.

Some experts have expressed concern that the compensatory system might hinder the progress of the blue bin scheme.



Bid to fell trees for car park sparks angry riots

Hooded youths clashed with police on central Patission Street in Athens after a heated residents' protest against a municipal tree-felling initiative.

The youths torched police stations in Kypseli and Aghios Panteleimonas and then fire-bombed the entrance of the nearby Athens University of Economics and Business. They also set fire to trash cans and threw stones at police who responded with tear gas.

Earlier, hundreds of residents had protested in Amerikis Square where police guarded municipal workers cutting down trees in a local park to clear the way for a car park. The residents have taken legal action against the felling, complaining that plans for the car park aim to facilitate shoppers visiting the area, not local residents. Municipal authorities counter that the busy area needs two new car parks. They claim to have cut down just 12 trees, not 45 as residents assert.

Neighbourly messages in postcards

Had it not been for the workshop of Turkish photographer Mehmet Ilhan Cevizli, Omer Turel and Kamil Ercument Atak would never have met. The former would continue to be one of Istanbul's most successful surgeons and the latter would still be a resident of Istanbul at heart, with a Turkish name and a Greek mother, who has been earning a living as a photographer in Greece for the past 15 years.

Yet that random encounter led to a great friendship which has overcome distance and sometimes also pro-



duced artistic results, such as the exhibition that opened recently at the Ligue Franco-Hellenique and runs to Saturday.

Titled «Big Postcards from the Neighbor,» the exhibition features a selection of photographs that very consciously

define the meaning of «postcard.» There are landscapes and images from a familiar Turkey, which border on tourist propaganda. Visitors can enjoy dazzling sunsets, captivating mosques, fascinating panoramic takes on well-known as well as unknown cities, colorful bazaars and dervishes.

«We had to start somewhere,» said Turel, «but we wanted to make a calm and smooth start, without too many surprises. We didn't want to scare anybody.»

The initial idea had been to hold a joint exhibition, but lots of difficulties arose, such as that the two photographers (one of them a professional and the other an amateur) live in different countries. The process of selecting what was to be included in the album and what would have to be omitted might have taken longer than they could both afford. «We thought it would be better to do small, thematic exhibitions in Greece and Turkey, at the same time doing something that can take us beyond photography,» said Ercument Atak in impeccable Greek. «Politics will always be politics,» he added with a shrug.

«It is the historical Turkey that interests people outside Turkey,» said Turel when I



asked him if the image of Turkey seen in this display is the image that is more in demand abroad. He further explained that when asked to do a series of panoramic shots of Istanbul, he was taken to the 34th floor of a skyscraper. When he started taking photographs, the organizers were not happy because they found that there were too many skyscrapers on the horizon and that was not at all what they had in mind.

The next step is very ambitious, since it will be part of the events program of 2010, when Istanbul will be European Capital of Culture. Kamil Ercument Atak will present photographs from Greece and Omer Turel photographs from Turkey, all of which will focus on archaeology. The exhibition will be accompanied by a recitation of C.P. Cavafy poetry as well as a display of works by a Greek and a Turkish artist. Archaeology - especially the ancient traces that can be found in modern cities - is one of Turel's favorite subjects. «Both Istanbul and Athens are now big metropolitan centers; they don't belong to their residents. Our cities no longer belong to us. What exists is the remains of the past, which of course belong to everybody.»

For the love of charity

Christine Lynch with her grandchildren John and Christian. Photo: ERIN BYRNE



Maroubra resident Christine Lynch's juggling act of raising five children along with dedicating her spare time to charity work has resulted in her being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.

«I feel so privileged and honoured - I don't feel I deserve it, really,» she said. «There are so many volunteers out there that this country wouldn't be able to function without them.»

She was recognised for her service to the Greek community, but her work has included raising money for diabetes, leukaemia, victims of Cyclone Tracy and an SBS radiothon for those affected by Greek bushfires in 2007.

Mrs Lynch, 62, moved from Greece to Australia when she was four years old.

She married John Lynch and they had five children and ran a florist's business in Rozelle for almost 20 years.

Mrs Lynch became involved with the Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association through her husband, who died seven years ago.

«He was a community leader and I worked with him in his role,» she said. «We worked together as a team and I continued his legacy after he died.»

She said she got satisfaction from helping others. «I'm very lucky,» she said. «I've got five healthy children, I have had a very good life, and I would like to give something back to the community.»

«It has helped me a lot and taught me a lot of things, such as how to speak in public. It gives you a lot of confidence and you meet different people from all walks of life.»