

Incident against Greek Tourists in FYROM



Unidentified individuals attacked three tourist coaches carrying Greek tourists at Ochris, Skopje on Sunday evening. Foreign Ministry spokesman Giorgos Koumoutsakos denounced the attack strongly, asking from FYROM's (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) authorities to protect the Greek citizens, who visit FYROM.

"We condemn in the strongest way the organized attack from unknown individuals against the Greek visitors and their property," stated the spokesman.

"Unfortunately, such actions, which affect the communication between the two peoples, are the result of nationalism and bigotry turned against Greece, promoted by Skopje lately", said Mr Koumoutsakos. "We demand from FYROM to protect the Greek citizens, who are visiting their country; we also demand that the culprits are arrested and punished for yesterday's unprovoked attack."

On Sunday evening, about 20-30 individuals attacked three Greek tourist busses that were parked in the centre of Ochris, waiting for the Greek tourists to return from their excursion.

As per the local media, the culprits used spray to write on the coaches "Macedonia", "United Macedonia" and "Alexander the Great".

However, the Greek tourists added that the culprits had thrown against them pieces of wood and stones to one of the coaches, causing additional damage.

According to the local media, many Ochris inhabitants condemn the incident; as such actions defame their city's image.

Meanwhile, the Ochris Mayor denounced the incident, apologising for the incident to the Greek Liaison Committee in Skopje at the Greek consulate in Monastirie responsible for Financial and Commercial Affairs.

A little more licence when speeding

THE demerit point penalty system for drivers caught speeding is to be overhauled this week.

The State Government is set to announce changes that it says are designed to prevent motorists losing their licence for relatively minor speeding offences, while maintaining strict penalties for those who are caught travelling well over the limit. Late last year the Roads Minister, Michael Daley, said there were instances when drivers should lose only one point from their licences instead of three, and that his office would produce an amended scheme in coming months. It has been reported that more than 60,000 licences were suspended last year as a result of the demerit point penalty scheme. The same report said there were about 40,000 such suspensions the year before. By far the most speeding tickets are issued for exceeding the limit by less than 15kmh. Under the current regime, motorists lose three points for such an offence.

Nugas is spreading its wings

Nugas is spreading its wings, this week marked the beginning of NUGAS in Queensland. NUGAS representatives from NSW attended the first week of the the resumption of the the academic year at Queensland universities. NUGAS's main aim was to inform Greek/Australian university students of the work that NUGAS is doing in promoting Hellenism and encouraging young Greek/Australian university students to become members of NUGAS.



From L to R John Bellas, Lecturer at Queensland University of Technology, B' Coordonator SAE Oceania and Far East Region and Queensland SAE Coordinator, Yianni Flourentzou (NUGAS QLD) Alex Georgiou (NUGAS QLD), James Calligeros (NUGAS NSW and NUGAS National Media Officer), Harry Mavrolefteros (NUGAS NSW and NUGAS National Treasurer).

"It was fantastic to see the Hellenic presence at the Queensland University of

Technology, no doubt that there is a thirst from young Greek/Australian kids

to come in touch with their Hellenic identity. NUGAS is in the forefront in bringing young Greek/Australian university students together and most importantly on a National level", John Bellas said.

NUGAS representatives will also visit University of Queensland, Griffith University and Bond University on the Gold Coast.

"I wish NUGAS QLD all the success in establishing themselves with strong foundations and pledge that SAE Oceania and Far East - Queensland will support them in everyway possible", John Bellas said.

A special thanks to Alex Georgiou for her excellent work in organising the event in Brisbane. Alex is a member of the SAE Youth in Queensland and also assisted in the organisation of the Pan Hellenic Games in Adelaide in 2007. There is no doubt that Alex will become an intregal part of NUGAS Qld. A thank you is also extended to Yianni Flourentzou for his assistance in organising this event.

Social Security Agreement between Australia and Greece

Deadline extended to 31 March 2009

The Social Security Agreement between Australia and Greece commenced on 1 October 2008, and people have been given an extended deadline till 31 March 2009 to respond to their Centrelink letters.

Around 99% of the Greek community in Australia have responded to Centrelink's letters, but there are a very small number to be dealt with.

"Centrelink is working with Greek community groups to develop appropriate strategies to allay the fears of the small percentage of people who have not yet responded to Centrelink's letters," Federal Member for Hindmarsh, Mr Steve Georganas MP said.

"Implementation of other social security agreements has shown that this reaction is commonly experienced and that working with community groups to develop specific targeted strategies is the most effective way of dealing with concerns.

"Centrelink officers, including Greek language speakers whenever possible, have been calling people who have yet to respond to their reminder letters.

"As the Member of Parliament in an electorate representing the largest number of people with a Greek background

in Australia, I welcome this move and support the community discussion process to assist people with their concerns," Mr Georganas said.

A number of steps have been taken to provide information, and to explain Centrelink's requirements and procedures.

These include meetings with peak community groups, community information sessions around Australia, bilingual fact sheets and advertisements in both English and Greek community newspapers and on community and SBS radio.

Around 50,000 residents of Australia and Greece have improved access to the age pension from the Greek and Australian Governments with the introduction of the new social security agreement.

Australia's agreement with Greece will provide improved access to age pensions from both countries for people who spent part of their adult lives working in Greece or living in Australia.

For more detailed information people should contact Centrelink International Services for free help and advice. Call 13 1673 from within Australia.

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