

Attack destroys Athens subway train carriages



ATHENS, Greece: Masked arsonists forced passengers off an Athens subway train and then set it alight, police said Tuesday. Several carriages of two trains were destroyed, but nobody was injured. The attack occurred at a subway station that is above ground in the northern suburb of Kifissia shortly after 1 a.m. (2300GMT).

Police said a group of people wearing carnival masks forced the handful of passengers on one train to leave, and then doused the carriages with gasoline before using Molotov cocktails to set them alight. They also attacked a second, empty train. Thirty firefighters with 10 fire trucks eventually extinguished the blaze, but the attack destroyed six carriages on one train and damaged three on the second train, authorities said.

Greece holding contest for best essay My Greek Roots

ATHENS,- Within the framework of international events timed to the Greece Independence Day, SAE Former USSR Countries announced a competition for the best composition on the My Greek Roots subject.

The main objective of the competition is to preserve and develop national self-identification.

The contest is proceeding February 11 through March 20, 2009.

According to organizers, participation in the contest is open to Greek language school children, students of Greek departments of the former USSR member-countries' universities, as well as all pupils aging from 12 to 35.

The essays must be sent to the organization committee (170 Krasnoarmeiskaya Street, Rostov-na-Donu, Russia, 344000) or by e-mail (blackseagreeks@mail.ru mailto:blackseagreeks@mail.ru), marked Composition Contest.

All the participants in the project will get presents from SAE USSR. The authors of the three best works will be given valuable prizes.

Flour wars brighten Greek streets

Hundreds of people have taken part in a huge flour fight in the seaside village of Galaxidi in Greece. Two teams throw bags of coloured flour at each other as part of the messy flour war tradition to mark the start of 40 days of Lent until Easter. Food colouring is added to more than 1,500kg of flour to brighten up the battle. It may look great, but officials say it takes ages to clean up afterwards even though loads of people cover their homes with plastic sheeting to try to protect them. It's not clear how or why the tradition started, but it's believed to date back to around 1801.



European court fines Turkey in Greek Orthodox case

The European Court of Human Rights Tuesday ruled Turkey had violated the property rights of a Greek Orthodox foundation by seizing its land and ordered the government to pay damages.

Judges said Turkey had breached the European Convention on Human Rights by barring the foundation from registering its title to a church and surrounding lands on the Aegean island of Bozcaada, a statement from the court said.

It is the latest ruling by the Strasbourg-based court against

Turkey for violating the property rights of its ethnic Greek minority. The European Union, which Turkey seeks to join, has called on the government to return seized properties to minorities and expand their religious and cultural freedoms. The European Court of Human Rights fined Turkey 105,000 euros (\$131,880) for damages and expenses after it ruled authorities had illegally prevented the rightful owner of the Kimisis Teodoku Greek Orthodox Church from registering its property, the

statement said.

The foundation was denied the right to register its title to three pieces of land and a building on the island after the state land registry was reorganized in 1991, the statement said. Turkish courts had ruled against the foundation because it had missed an initial deadline to re-register its deed and had ordered the property be turned over to the state Treasury. The Istanbul-based Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, spiritual leader of 250 million faithful worldwide, has filed more than two dozen cases with the European Court of Human Rights to recover some of the thousands of properties it says it has lost.

In September, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in a separate case that Turkey had violated the property rights of the patriarchate by seizing a 100-year-old orphanage on an island off of Istanbul and ordered its return.

It has also ruled that Turkey illegally took control of other properties in Istanbul owned by Greek foundations.

About 25 mostly elderly ethnic Greeks live on Bozcaada, part of a community of 2,500 Greeks in Turkey, which is 99 percent Muslim. Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, is also home to about 15,000 Jews and 60,000 Armenians.

Jail a 'hotbed of criminal activity'

Korydallos Prison, ostensibly Attica's main high-security penitentiary, is actually a hotbed of criminal activity with a turnover of some 50 million euros per year, sources have told Kathimerini, noting that escapes from the jail by two notorious convicts in 2006 and last week as well as two abductions of prominent businessmen had been planned inside its walls. The failure of jail authorities to segregate serial robber Vassilis Palaiocostas and convicted murderer Alket Rizai facilitated their escape last month. But similar security lapses at Korydallos, and in other jails, are believed to have facilitated the planning of other crimes, the sources said. For example the members of the group that devised and executed the abduction of senior Thessaloniki industrialist Giorgos Mylonas last June are believed to have done their planning by telephone between the jails of Korydallos, Trikala and Diavata.

The first escape from Korydallos jail by Palaiocostas and Rizai, in June 2006, was planned on the prison grounds, the same sources said. An April 2008 indictment lodged against 13 people implicated in the 2006 escape notes, "The first development in the chain of events that led to the escape was the acquaintance of Vassilis Stefanakos (charged with complicity) with Spyros Dravilas (charged as one of the two helicopter hijackers) which occurred inside Korydallos jail while the two men were inmates." The kidnapping of shipping tycoon Pericles Panagopoulos in January is believed to have been planned in jail too.

Criminal plans hatched inside Korydallos are believed to be generating millions of euros per year for the perpetrators. Together with drug dealing inside the jail, these activities are believed to be worth some 50 million euros. Turnover from the heroin trade alone is believed to be around 500,000 euros per year.