



Greek Cypriots 'can reclaim land'

The EU's top court has backed the right of a Greek Cypriot to reclaim land in Turkish-controlled northern Cyprus that has since been sold to a UK couple.

Meletis Apostolides was one of thousands of Greek Cypriots who fled his home when Turkish forces invaded in 1974, following a Greek-inspired coup.

The land was later sold to Linda and David Orams, who built a villa on it.

The European Court of Justice says a ruling in a Cypriot court that the villa must be demolished is applicable.

Even if the ECJ ruling cannot be enacted because the land is under Turkish Cypriot control, it means Mr Apostolides will be able to pursue a claim for compensation in a UK court.

It could also open the way for hundreds more Greek Cypriots to demand restitution for properties they were forced to flee.

Many Britons and other foreigners have invested in property in northern Cyprus, despite the legal ownership still being in some doubt.

Mr Apostolides said he was "very much" pleased with the EU court's ruling, and that it was "what we expected".

He added: "This is a difficult issue that has to be decided by the courts."

Tom Koutsantonis reveals his licence was suspended twice

DISGRACED former Road Safety Minister Tom Koutsantonis now says he has had 60 traffic offences - not the 59 he admitted to in Parliament.

Mr Koutsantonis made a personal explanation to the House of Assembly today that the number of offences had been miscounted when his ministerial statement for Tuesday's sitting was being drawn up.

He said it had been a simple miscalculation because the information from the statement had been drawn from a number of sources, including the courts and the police.

Yesterday, Mr Koutsantonis revealed he had lost his licence on three occasions and on another occasions had been disqualified but won his licence back on appeal.

The Opposition says he is unsuitable to hold a ministerial position and has more questions to answer about his conduct.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith today said the minister had had several chances to be honest with the public and colleagues but he continued to withhold the full story.

"His responses make it clear that he is an unsuitable person to continue as a minister in the Rann Government," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

He said the failure of Premier Mike Rann to act on Mr Koutsantonis's record showed he had little interest in



the credibility of government.

"From the moment this story emerged, the Premier should have instructed his office to establish full details of legal actions involving his minister," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

"He either knew, or didn't bother to find out. Either way it is a signal to the public of SA that he is not interested in open, accountable and credible government."

Yesterday, Mr Koutsantonis told Parliament he had lost his licence on two more occasions than previously revealed.

He said his licence was suspended temporarily on two occasions for late payment of traffic fines as well as the accumulation of demerit points.

Mr Koutsantonis had to appeal in February, 1998, against another disqualification in order to retain his licence, according to a statement made in Parliament on Tuesday.

Later, in answer to questions from the Opposition, he denied having had an arrest warrant issued against him for traffic offences nor having any of his cars repossessed while he was a minister.

It is the first time Mr Koutsantonis has revealed the details of the suspensions which follow two weeks of controversy over his driving record. This totals 59 infringements in a 14-year period from June, 1994, to May, 2008 - including four as an MP in his taxpayer-funded car.

Mr Koutsantonis was forced to resign from his road safety portfolio last week after it was revealed he had more than 30 road traffic offences and had lost his licence for three months in 1999 for the accumulation of demerit points.

At that time, Mr Koutsantonis said: "I lost my licence for the accumulation of demerit points and I told Parliament I was guilty of speeding". Asked if there were any other offences to come out, he said he thought his last offence was in 2005. "If there is there will be full disclosure," he said.

"I am not trying to hide or cover up anything."

In his four-page statement, Mr Koutsantonis said the "intense embarrassment and regret this has caused is a matter that will never rest easy with me again".

Mr Koutsantonis said he had also completed a 12-month good behaviour agreement which began in December, 2005, after accruing a further 12 demerit points.

"I have twice been temporarily suspended from driving due to the late payment of traffic fines," Mr Koutsantonis said. "I was suspended from December 15, 2004, to February 4, 2005, and from March 26, 2006, to May 15, 2006."

Mr Koutsantonis said he had not told the Premier, Mike Rann, about the temporary suspensions because they were not imposed because of his driving behaviour, but for the non-payment of fines.

Training, a hurdle this junior has to get over

Natasha Fountas returned from the Australian Little Athletics Championships in Adelaide yesterday having come first in the 800m.

The Chifley resident was one of 11 girls and 11 boys selected for the NSW team, which came second overall, behind Victoria.

Natasha, who has been nominated for the Southern Courier's Junior Sports Star Award, also came in fifth in the 1500m.

Her dad, John, who joined his daughter in Adelaide, said she'd been ecstatic over the result.

Natasha started running aged seven. Now 13, she has competed at the Pacific School Games and won two gold medals, in the under-13 800m and 1500m races, at the NSW Little Athletics Championships.

"I like running, but I don't know if I can go to the Olympics because I don't really like the training," she said. "I'll give it a go - but I don't think I can train seven days a week."

The Southern Courier's Junior Sports Star Award is sponsored by Rebel Sport and Pacific Square Shopping Centre.



Young athlete Natasha Fountas. Photo: Alan Place