

Trees, ornaments recycling

On Sunday, the 250 natural fir trees which formed the City of Athens

Christmas tree will travel from Syntagma Square to the Pendeli range, to start a new life as a new forest.

The fir tree saplings that made up Athens' environmentally friendly Christmas tree during the festive season are not "disposable" but living organisms which constitute a vital element of the environment, according to a City of Athens announcement.

With this in mind, the City of Athens is participating in a tree-planting organized by the Pendeliko Protection and Regeneration Association (SPAP) with the support of SKAI private radio and television station and - as announced at the launch of Christmas events - will transfer the 250 fir trees to the fire-stricken Megaro Doukissis Plakendias area in Pendeli, so that they can be planted there.

Athens Mayor Kaklamanis has invited all Athenians to participate in a Christmas tree and ornament recycling programme, the aim of which is to ensure that the materials are reused after the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The recycling of natural and synthetic trees, Christmas ornaments



and lights, which are used each year during the festive season, has now been incorporated in an integrated recycling programme implemented by the City of Athens.

Citizen participation in the recycling programme entails a simple procedure and, most importantly, constitutes a practical expression of love for the environment and the city of Athens. More specifically, immediately after the holidays end:

- City of Athens crews will collect natural Christmas trees and transfer them to the Agricultural University of Athens, so that they can be con-

verted into fertiliser. Citizens need only leave their tree in a visible place next to their nearest municipal garbage bin.

- Apart from natural trees, synthetic (plastic) Christmas trees are also recyclable (the majority are made from polyvinyl chloride, known as PVC). The trunk of synthetic trees is the only section that can be recycled and should be placed in a blue recycling bin.

- Christmas ornaments can be recycled, depending on the materials used. More specifically, glass, plastic and paper ornaments should be placed in blue recycling bins.

- Citizens can take their Christmas lights to City District offices, so that City of Athens crews can collect them and take them to an approved lighting fixture recycling organisation. Citizens can also call the Municipality's recycling line 1960.

Deputy Mayor for Waste Management and Environment Yiorgos Dimopoulos noted: "Our effort to ensure Athens is clean and environmentally-friendly does not constitute a maxim or communication trick. It is an endless process, and on every possible occasion we strive to make a difference, reducing our ecological footprint on nature but by also raising awareness and encouraging citizens to participate in every action, which aims at recycling, environmental protection, cleanliness and the improvement of Athens' appearance."



Aegean could be sea of peace

The Aegean is precious for Greece, a source of inspiration, and could be a sea of peace and bridge of Greece's relations with Turkey provided that the neighboring country fully respects international law and Greece's national sovereignty, alternate foreign minister Dimitris Droutsas said on Wednesday, speaking after the Epiphany blessing of the waters on the remote island of Agathonissi.

Droutsas noted that the island inhabitants were those who first and foremost desired good relations, peace and tranquil relations between Greece and Turkey, adding that "this is the message we want to send, that the Greek people wish to cooperate with the neighboring people, but in adherence of the self-evident, with respect for good neighbor relations".

The alternate minister stressed that Greece is prepared for such cooperation, but at the same time is "absolute and strict" with respect to the country's sovereign rights, and warned that Greece has both the determination and the means to respond to any provocations and to effectively defend its sovereign rights.

The island's community leader Evangelos Kotoros, in turn, said that the "outlandish, historically ungrounded theory of grey zones of the Turkish neighbors and their actions", such as the violations of Greece's national airspace, found the Agathonissi residents in the ramparts.

Sea level rise on Samos

Damages caused to local businesses in the low-lying parts of the capital of Samos, the same-name eastern Aegean island, over the past 20 days as a result of rising seas, are being recorded ahead of a rehabilitation programme.

The University of Athens (NTUA) has undertaken to propose appropriate solutions after studying figures concerning the rising sea level -- following the onslaught of unseasonably strong southerly winds -- as well as the waterfront and the seafloor roadways.

Epiphany celebrated throughout Greece with Blessing of the Waters

The religious feast of Epiphany was celebrated throughout Greece on Wednesday with the traditional Blessing of the Waters.

The ritual commemorates Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan, and according to St. John Chrysostom the day is called Epiphany, (from the Greek word for 'manifestation', 'epifania') because Jesus Christ manifested Himself to all people not when He was born but, rather, when He was baptized.

On Epiphany daring Greeks brave the cold waters to dive for the cross after it has been blessed by a priest and thrown into the water, and the one who recovers the cross is blessed with good luck throughout the year.

Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece

officialiated at the main ceremony in Piraeus, Greece's largest port, attended by President of the Republic Karolos Papoulias, while members of the Greek Seals dove for the cross.

Representing the government at the ceremony was economy, competitiveness and shipping minister

Louka Katseli, while main opposition New Democracy (ND) was represented by MP Yiannis Tragakis. Other officials in attendance included Parliament's first vice president Grigoris Niotis, MPs from the Piraeus electoral districts, mayor Panagiotis Fassoulas, and prefect

Yiannis Michas.

Prime minister George Papandreou attended the Epiphany ceremony on the eastern Aegean island of Lesbos, while main opposition ND leader Antonis Samaras attended the ceremony in his home town of Pylos.

In Athens, the city's mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis and culture and tourism development minister Pavlos Geroulanos attended the Blessing of the Waters at the Reservoir (Dexameni) in Kolonaki district.

In Thessaloniki, the ceremony was officiated by Metropolitan Anthimos, and attended by defence minister Evangelos Venizelos, Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) leader George Karatzaferis, Thessaloniki prefect Panagiotis Psomiadis and mayor Vasilis Papageorgopoulos.

