

In Brief...**Acropolis Museum completes first year**

More than two million people have visited the new Acropolis Museum during its first year of operation, according to figures presented by the museum on June 17.

The museum's board chairman Prof Demetris Pandalis said the museum received a total of 2,010,641 visitors in its first year, had set research and scientific goals, made progress in the area of conservation and also in educational programmes.

Pair linked to buried corpse 'also burned old woman alive'

A 20-year-old man from the northern city of Drama and his 40-year-old girlfriend who have been charged with the murder of a 39-year-old man, whose corpse was found buried under a henhouse in the couple's backyard in the village of Sitagroi last week, are thought to be behind another murder, police said.

Police in Drama believe the pair to be connected to the death of an elderly woman who was burned alive in her home in the northern city in January.

The pair are believed to have robbed the 83-year-old before setting fire to her home.

Salonika blasts

Unidentified arsonists used homemade explosive devices comprising gas canisters to hit two union and one government targets in Thessaloniki, causing damage but no injuries.

Two of the bombs detonated almost simultaneously at the offices of the local doctors' union and the home of a senior regional official for the health service.

The third device, which had been planted outside the local offices of the Health Ministry, did not detonate. Earlier yesterday a similar explosive device, also made of gas canisters, detonated outside a bank in Kalamaria, near Thessaloniki, causing damage but no injuries.

Child molester

Police in Larissa, central Greece, detained a 33-year-old man alleged to have molested a 9-year-old girl in the foyer of an apartment block in the city center.

The child's cries attracted the attention of residents in the block who came to her aid but the suspect fled before they arrived.

Police arrested the 33-year-old on the basis of a description given by the girl to her parents.

Kalashnikov robbers

Police were seeking two robbers who held up a branch of National Bank in Aghioi Theodoroi, near Corinth, on Thursday, wielding Kalashnikov assault rifles, before making off with an unspecified sum.

No one was hurt in the raid, which culminated in the robbers fleeing in a car reported as stolen a few days before.

**A new Athens on the cards**

Environment, Energy and Climate Change Minister Tina Birbili presented last week a programme for the environmental management of Athens and the wider Attica basin for the 2010-14 period, outlining the ministry's priorities for the capital and surrounding countryside.

These included arresting the spread of urban sprawl to rural areas of Attica and better transport options that include bicycle lanes with two routes, from the Falero delta to Vouliagmeni and from Kifisia to Neo Falero.

Other measures include making greater use of trains, a tram extension to Patission St, a major programme to improve currently rundown inner city areas like Agios Panteleimonas, Theatrou Square and Kolonos, the creation of three metropolitan parks and protection of the Attica countryside and mountains.

Birbili clarified that the programme, entitled Athens-Attica 2014, was binding in terms of its goals and directions for the New Attica Regulatory Plan, which is due to be completed in the form of a draft bill and presented for public debate at the end of 2010.

The ministry programme calls for extensive pedestrianisation in central Athens, including Vasilissis Olgas Avenue and Panepistimiou St, which will open only to tram and trolley buses.

Apart from the pedestrianisation of Vasilissis Olgas, which will soon enter the tendering stage, all the other projects remain on paper, and necessary feasibility studies on them have yet to be carried out.

As it was clear from the June 14 press conference, the funding for many of the projects has not been secured, but the minister insisted that the money will come from a yet-to-be-established green fund, into which the fines on illegally built-in areas of homes originally planned as balconies, garages, basements or terraces (imiypaithrioi) will be channelled.

In a city where so much has been promised - indeed many of the plans included in the current programme are not new - the challenge for the minister will be to realise the ambitious plan.

Lick of paint

Another plank in the Athens-Attica 2014 initiative will see the exterior walls of several buildings in Athens acquire a more lively appearance following an initiative by the environment, energy and cli-

mate change ministry.

The 100,000 euro pilot project will be launched by the end of June in cooperation with Athens University's school of fine arts.

Urban waterfront of the Saronic Gulf

The plan promotes an integrated management approach to the Saronic coastline. The aim is the strengthening and enhancing of the public character of the coastline and the protection, ecological restoration and enhancement of its landscape.

Open waterfront

This will involve the completion of studies for opening access to Athens' coastline and beaches. Last May, the ministry kicked off this campaign by demolishing a disused nightclub in Agios Kosmas

Rejuvenation of Agios Panteleimonas Square

In an area that has hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons, the plan hopes to encourage reconciliation and harmonious coexistence between the different ethnic groups that live in the area by expanding the square, reducing traffic flows and enhancing green spaces

The pedestrianisation of Vasilissis Olgas Avenue

The pedestrianisation of this roadway will join the Zappeio Mansion and National Gardens with the Temple of Olympian Zeus, greatly expanding the ongoing plan to unify the archaeological sites of the capital, bringing the total length of the project to 4 kilometres. The pedestrianised stretch, which will be constructed according to bioclimatic principles, will remain open to trams. The project should cost in the region of 4 million euros and the feasibility study and tendering process are expected to be completed by this year

Improving the function and appearance of Attikis Square

By enriching the greenery and creating space for open-air gatherings and events, the plan will unify the neighbourhoods east and west of Liosion St