

IN BRIEF

Two Albanians killed in drive-by attacks in Athens

Police in Athens said they were investigating two fatal shootings early on Saturday, one in the western neighborhood of Peristeri and the other in the district of Aghios Panteleimonas near the city center. The first attack was carried out at around 8 a.m. by a gunman in a car driven by an accomplice. The victim was a young Albanian man. The second incident occurred shortly before 9 a.m. Again, an unidentified gunman fired from a moving car, killing a street kiosk manager, also an Albanian. The employee was shot dead while sitting in the kiosk. Both attacks are being treated as a settling of accounts.

Five suspects held, 9 sought

A 26-year-old Greek man was being questioned by police in Nikaia, near Piraeus, over the weekend as the suspected leader of a ring behind a series of arson attacks, thefts and drug deals. Officers said they are also questioning another two Greeks, aged 24 and 48, a 34-year-old Albanian national and 35-year-old Romanian woman and are seeking nine more suspects. The ring is believed to have staged arson attacks in Nikaia, Aghia Varvara and Peristeri. Police confiscated 2.5 kilograms of cannabis from the homes of the suspects.

Seminary appeal

A Turkish state minister has said Ankara should open the Greek Orthodox seminary of Halki, an island off the coast of Istanbul, to boost the rights of the country's non-Muslim minorities, Turkey's daily *Hurriyet* reported yesterday. "I personally would very much like to see the...seminary reopen...We need to permit this," said State Minister Bulent Arinc. "We must agree to the rightful requests, the basic rights of those of different faiths, because we are not just the government of Muslims," he added. The European Union, which Turkey aspires to join, has pressed Ankara to reopen the seminary, which has been closed for nearly four decades, to show its commitment to democratic pluralism.

J-Lo saga

A hotel in the Turkish-occupied north of Cyprus has threatened Jennifer Lopez with a 40-million-dollar (or 31-million-euro) lawsuit after the pop diva called off a concert there citing "political" reasons, press reports on the divided island said over the weekend. The head of the Turkish company managing the venue where Lopez had been scheduled to play said the singer had until the night of the July 24 concert to retract her cancellation. "If she does not show up... we will begin a procedure in the courts," said Murat Bozoglu, speaking from the company's headquarters in Istanbul. Lopez canceled the planned concert after vehement protests from Nicosia.



Poll highlights public discontent

Seven in 10 fed up with two main parties; a third would cast blank ballots in or boycott early elections

Seven in 10 Greeks are dissatisfied with their lives and feel let down by the country's two main political parties while a third would not vote for any of the five parties in Greece's Parliament, a new poll carried out on behalf of Kathimerini has found.

According to the survey carried by polling firm Public Issue on a sample of 1,006 citizens in the first week of July, 65 percent of respondents said they trusted neither ruling PASOK nor the main conservative opposition New Democracy to run the country. Another 25 percent said they think PASOK is the best party to lead the country while only 4 percent said they would want ND in power.

Still, eight out of 10 respondents said they were unhappy with the work of the PASOK administration,

which has focused on pushing through a raft of austerity measures since it came to power last October.

Nine out of 10 said they were unhappy with ND, which has been riven with internal disputes since last November when Antonis Samaras was elected party leader. A third of respondents said they would prefer a coalition government while another 17 percent wants a government representing all the parties in Parliament.

As regards the popularity of political leaders, Prime Minister George Papandreou has seen his support decline by three percentage points, to 40 percent, while Antonis Samaras has dropped 4 percentage points to 19 percent. A third of respondents said they would want neither of the

two in the role of premier.

In one of the most shocking findings, a third (35.5 percent) of the poll's respondents said that if elections were held today, they would either boycott the vote or cast a blank ballot.

In a related development, several Cabinet members sought to douse speculation about early elections being called this fall after Justice Minister Haris Kastanidis suggested the government should seek a new mandate. "Parliamentary elections are not on the government's agenda," said Agricultural Development and Food Minister Katerina Batzeli. Infrastructure, Transport and Networks Minister Dimitris Reppas also told reporters that early polls were out of the question.

Unknown group claims deadly hit

An unknown group claimed responsibility over the weekend for a fatal bomb attack last month that killed the 52-year-old assistant of Citizens Protection Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis.

In a letter published over the weekend in Eleftherotypia, the mystery group said that the device, which detonated on June 24 on the seventh floor of the ministry, killing Giorgos Vassilakis, had been intended for the minister.

The four-page document described the explosive device in detail and said the group had targeted Chrysochoidis for taking "repressive" action against "those resisting the offensive against the people," an apparent reference to the austerity measures being passed by the debt-ridden government. The first paragraph of the document reads, "When the government violates the rights of the people, armed insurgency – either by the whole of society or a section of it – is its most sacred and crucial duty."

The letter said the group behind the ministry hit had been "newly formed" and would reveal its name after a subsequent attack. The sender of the document is identified as Thanassis Klaras, the real name of Aris Velouch-

iotis. Velouchiotis was the founder of the People's Liberation Army (ELAS), the military branch of the National Liberation Front (EAM), which was the major resistance organization in Nazi-occupied Greece from 1942 to 1945.

Separately, police on Saturday arrested a 32-year-old suspect in connection with an unexploded bomb found on the site of the old Xenia Hotel near Mount Parnitha, north of Athens. The suspect, who in 2007 was charged with the attempted murder of an Athens nightclub owner, is not believed to have any links to terrorist groups.

Teen deaths

Two youths, aged 16 and 17, were killed on Saturday when the scooter they had been riding on the old Patras-Corinth national road veered off course and crashed. The accident occurred shortly after 4 a.m. near the Diakopto junction. The exact circumstances of the crash remained unclear yesterday.