

In Brief

Thessaloniki monuments?

The incoming mayor of Thessaloniki said in an interview that he plans to build a monument in the northern port city to the movement headed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of the modern Turkish state, chiefly as a way of attracting Turkish visitors. Yiannis Boutaris, an idiosyncratic vintner and the city's first Socialist-backed mayor in 24 years, said he also intended to build a monument commemorating thousands of Thessaloniki Jews who were killed by occupying German forces. «Our aim is for 300,000 Jews and 300,000 Turks to come and pay homage to their family heritage in the same way that we go to Istanbul,» Boutaris told Eleftherotipia newspaper.

Iranian migrants get protection

Citizens' Protection Minister Christos Papoutsis granted political asylum to 26 Iranian immigrants who have been on hunger strike for several weeks. The protesters, five of whom had sewn their mouths shut, claim to have submitted their applications for asylum more than eight years ago. The ministry has set up a new committee to speed up the processing of asylum applications and plow through a huge backlog.

Smoking fine

Motorists or passengers caught smoking in the presence of minors aged under 12 will face a fine of 1,500 euros, according to a legislative amendment tabled in Parliament. The fine will be doubled if they happen to be in a public vehicle such as a bus or trolley bus. Offending motorists will have their licenses revoked for one month. The news of the amendment came amid reports that the government is planning to permit smoking in cafes and bars after 9 p.m. while keeping a blanket ban in place for restaurants.

Greece marks Polytechnic uprising

The three-day commemoration of the 37th anniversary of the 17 November 1973 Polytechnic uprising against the military dictatorship in Greece came to an end on Wednesday with a march through the centre of Athens and Greek police firing tear gas and detaining dozens of demonstrators.

Police estimate that more than 20 000 people took part in the annual march from Polytechnic to the US embassy in Athens on Wednesday noon, raising banners with the classic slogan of students of 1973 "Bread, Education, Freedom" and chanting slogans on the economic crisis and austerity measures, such as "IMF go home".

Police detained over 40 people towards the end of the march after firing tear gas and charging one bloc that was throwing stones and bottles at riot police.

Five protesters were also detained in a smaller demonstration in the city of Patras but were later released.

Another 12 000 people marched in Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city.

Greek President Karolos Papoulias, Prime Minister George Papandreou and representatives of opposition political parties and labour u-



Police take action against Polytechnic student demonstrators commemorating the Polytechnic Student Rising of 1973.

nions who laid wreaths earlier on Tuesday and Wednesday to the monument that commemorates the dead of the uprising inside the Polytechnic School, also focused on the significance of the message of the 1973 uprising.

"This year's anniversary comes in a difficult period for Greece with a lot at stake. It reminds us that youth always leads social struggles for change," said Papoulias in his message, paying tribute to the young people who were killed during the uprising.

"Struggle for democracy and freedom is never ending. Citizens should take part, with belief and hope for a better future. That's why we give struggles today," stressed Papandreou after placing a few flowers on the monument, among parents who taught history on the spot to children.

In its own statement, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) called on the working people and youth to "honour the Polytechnic" by actively participating in the social and political movements opposed to the EU/IMF memorandum and the austerity measures.

It said that the heavy sacrifices being imposed on the people will have no end, and no result for the people, while only the creation of a strong social popular alliance against the monopolies, the EU and the parties that serve capitalism can raise obstacles to the barbarous.

The Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology (Syn), in a statement, said that the 1973 uprising lives in today's struggles for peace, equality, democracy and social liberation.

Source: ANA, Athens News, Xinhua, Reuters

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