



Disabled hold protest outside Finance Ministry

Dozens of disabled citizens gathered outside the main offices of the Finance Ministry in central Athens on Friday to protest reductions to their salaries and pensions imposed as part of a broader government austerity program.

The union representing the country's disabled is lobbying the

government to provide relief to the retired and working disabled and for guardians of those with heavy disabilities.

Unionists have demanded a meeting with Finance Minister Yannis Stourmaras, Labor and Social Insurance Minister Yiannis Vroutsis and others to discuss their grievances.

FinMin pledges new measures will not be needed as Samaras rallies ministers

Finance Minister Yannis Stourmaras insisted on Friday the government would not impose any new taxes or wage cuts beyond those already agreed in Greece's fiscal consolidation program, as Prime Minister Antonis Samaras sought to give his coalition new impetus.

"This is the last time that our citizens will have to carry such a burden," Stourmaras told Parliament. "The Greek government will not take other measures that have to do with wage cuts, pension cuts and tax hikes. From now on, the program focuses on changes that bring about the modernization of the state." Stourmaras was involved in a brisk exchange with SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras after the latter accused the government of failing to capitalize on the International Monetary Fund's error in calculating the impact that the Greek austerity measures would have on the economy.

The finance minister hit back, saying Athens had raised the issue with the troika late last year and that he had asked Greece's lenders this week to give a joint assessment on the matter, which prompted European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn to argue the Greek program had suffered from domestic political instability and implementation problems.



"Of course I believe that the multiplier issue is important and of course I believe that the mistake is not just ours," Stourmaras said in response to Tsipras's questions. "Clearly, Mr Rehn is mistaken if he believes that the whole recession was a result of just Greece's mistakes. However, I cannot follow the leap you make from the IMF using an incorrect parameter to having to

cancel the whole program and abandon the memorandum."

Samaras held a rare cabinet meeting on Friday to stress the importance of pushing through structural reforms and improving the absorption of EU structural funds. Former Hania Mayor Kyriakos Virvidakis was appointed deputy development minister to oversee the use of these funds.

Albanian national arrested on child porn charges

Officers of the electronic crimes squad have arrested a 39-year-old Albanian national in Kapandriti, northern Attica, on charges of child pornography.

The suspect was taken into custody after authorities conducting a house search found pornographic material featuring minors on a laptop computer.

SDOE probing 11 doctors in DePuy healthcare scandal

Eleven state hospital doctors who were unable to justify a total of 5.8 million euros in their bank accounts are under investigation by officials of the Financial Crimes Squad (SDOE) as part of a corruption scandal involving DePuy, a subsidiary of US healthcare giant Johnson & Johnson. According to SDOE, officials of a Greek company based on the Isle of Man bribed state hospital doctors in Athens, Thessaloniki and Patra in order to promote DePuy products.

More than 20 million euros in fines were imposed on this and other firms implicated in the affair. Officials of two orthopedic suppliers reportedly visited the Finance Ministry to pay a settlement of 12.1 million euros. SDOE is also probing a German pharmaceutical firm alleged to have bribed researchers to promote its products. Last month a prosecutor charged five DePuy officials with corruption and money laundering.

State sees low return on education investment

Every graduate degree from a public university costs the Greek state between 5,000-95,000 euros, with Athens Medical School topping the price scale.

Greek universities receive 97.9 percent of their funding from the state – the highest rate among the 35 member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – raising concerns that it is getting a low return on its investment as an increasing number of graduates with specialized degrees look for work abroad.

"In many specific academic areas 90 percent of the investment is lost," according to Theodoros Hadzipantelis, a professor of applied statistics at the Aristotle University.

For example, data show that 1,554 Greek medical school graduates worked in Germany in 2007, a figure that shot up to 6,000 in 2012.

Golden Dawn 'guards' arrested

Two men arrested in Haidari, western Athens, earlier this month, after they were found carrying a range of weapons, are thought to be part of the personal guard of a Golden Dawn MP.

Police released photos of the two men late on Thursday as authorities believe the suspects, aged 19 and 27, were involved in criminal activity.

Officers stopped the men's car on February 5 as it did

not have a rear license plate. They found a handgun, two expandable batons, two switchblades, gloves, a ski mask and two crash helmets in the vehicle.

One suspect was named as Panayiotis Drakos, the other Grigoris-Loukas Haidas.

Police said the two were allegedly involved in offenses committed by Golden Dawn supporters but did not give further details.

