

Thessaloniki Mayor Boutaris defends mosque move

A week after inviting a group of students from the Muslim School of Komotini, in northern Greece, to visit and pray in Thessaloniki's New (Yeni) Mosque – for the first time after 88 years – Mayor Yiannis Boutaris has hit back at criticism of the move.

Writing for Kathimerini on Sunday, Boutaris, who has often come under fire from Orthodox priests and conservative

pundits, said the move will “promote the city by highlighting the full range of its historical and cultural legacy.”

Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city, retains several Ottoman and Jewish structures. “The students' visit... is a clear sign of respect and religious tolerance not just toward our Muslim citizens but also toward societies with majority Muslim populations,” he added.



DOG OWNERS: Clean up or pay up!

As of Monday, pet owners who do not clean up after their animals face being fined by their local authority. A new law that seeks to penalize pet owners who do not take care of their furry friends will come into effect on Monday, introducing penalties of up to 30,000 euros. Owners who do not clean up the mess pets leave behind will face fines of 100 euros; if they do not provide their municipality

with proof that the animal has been electronically registered, the fine will be 300 euros.

If drivers hurt an animal in an accident and abandon the scene, they will also be fined 300 euros. The sale of an animal less than eight weeks old will carry a fine of 1,000 euros, while anyone found guilty of abusing their pet will face a financial penalty of up to 30,000 euros.



Investigation finds fresh evidence ahead of trial

Magistrates investigating former Defense Minister Akis Tsochatzopoulos, who is to stand trial with 18 other suspects on April 22, have found that the ex-PASOK veteran passed on some of the bribes he allegedly received in cash, rather than transferring all the money through offshore companies.

Evidence suggests that in one instance alone, Tsochatzopoulos gave 20 million

euros to former Defense Ministry general secretary Yiannis Sbokos so he could invest it on his behalf.

The Athens Council of Appeals Court Judges last month indicted Tsochatzopoulos and another 18 people alleged to have taken kickbacks from military procurement deals that were signed during the ex-minister's time in power.



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