



The Greek actress Thalia Prokopiou, cast in the role of a high priestess, lights an Olympic torch from a flaming cauldron at the temple of Hera

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Greek Games future not as bright as its past

From James Pringle
in Olympia

GREECE has been given a 100-day deadline by the International Olympic Committee to "shape up" or risk losing the right to stage the 2004 Olympics, (IOC) officials said.

The auguries, based on events at ancient Olympia yes-

terday, are not good. At a ceremony that heralded the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, the Olympic torch failed to light — the sun god Apollo chose that moment to ignore prayers from a high priestess and temporarily disappeared behind a cloud on an otherwise sunny day. The silver vessel had to be lit from a flame

that had been ignited from a reflecting mirror at a dress rehearsal on Tuesday.

The torch then set off on a relay through Greece and then on to its 17,000-mile journey to Australia through 17 countries of the South Pacific, from Western Samoa to Fiji.

The IOC is concerned about security, and delays in the con-

struction of sports venues, the Olympic Village, hotel bookings, television rights and transportation.

Last month Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC's president, said that the Athens 2004 Games would be in danger unless there were drastic changes. On Tuesday Costas Simitis, the Greek Prime

Minister, responded by replacing the chief organiser of the Games. Yianna Angelopoulos, the lawyer who has taken over from Panagiotis Thomopoulos, had earlier spent more than £300,000 of her own money to gain support for the Athens bid.

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