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Greeks under pressure over 2004 delays

OLYMPIC GAMES

GREECE WAS under pressure yesterday after blunt criticism from the International Olympic Committee president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, over preparations for the 2004 Games.

The IOC leader said that the Athens Games could be in danger if the Greeks fail to improve their organisation drastically by the end of the year.

"There are only four years to the opening ceremony," Samaranch said. "It is time for the government to take responsibility ... We hope after this warning things will be in the right way. If at the end of the year no measures have been taken, then we will see."

Sources on the Athens committee said that the IOC has been concerned about the progress of projects including the Olympic village, hotels and transport. Greece's bureaucracy and in-fighting have caused delays that prompted some Greek officials to describe the past two years as "wasted".