

MILESTONE

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GHOST MALLS

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INSIDE

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LIVING page 30

Parties clash over incomplete steps

Despite VAT offset measures not being final, arguments have started to rage

By Jacqueline Agathocleous

GOVERNMENT measures to offset recent VAT hikes on foodstuffs and pharmaceuticals may not have been announced yet, but that hasn't stopped arguments breaking out over the details.

Labour Minister Sotiroula Charalambous yesterday announced that the package was "90 per cent complete" and would soon be presented to President Demetris Christofias for approval.

Some final details needed to be ironed out, she added, while the plan also had to be examined by technocrats.

The minister said the aim of the measures was to make up for the losses that

are suffered by vulnerable sectors of the public from the new 5.0 per cent VAT.

She said the offset measures would either be submitted in the form of a one-off payment, or in another form - such as a percentage on the monthly wage.

Citing sources, the CyBC reported on Friday night that the government's package was estimated to reach around €20 million, with 70 to 80 thousand beneficiaries.

The same sources claimed the measures would target pensioners with very low pensions, those who have been unemployed for over six months, workers in the private sector who don't receive the cost of living allowance (CoLA), large families and households

TURN TO PAGE 2



A girl hangs a wooden votive tablet after writing her wishes at Yushima Tenjin shrine in Tokyo yesterday. Students and parents go to Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples all over Japan this time of year to pray for success in the country's school entrance exams (AFP)

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INSIDE

Cyprus

Direction needed as leaders meet UN chief

6-7

Property

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27

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48



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