

Happy New Year

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Firebrand MEP to stand for president

Matsakis shock



By CHARLIE CHARALAMBOUS AND DEMETRA MOLYA

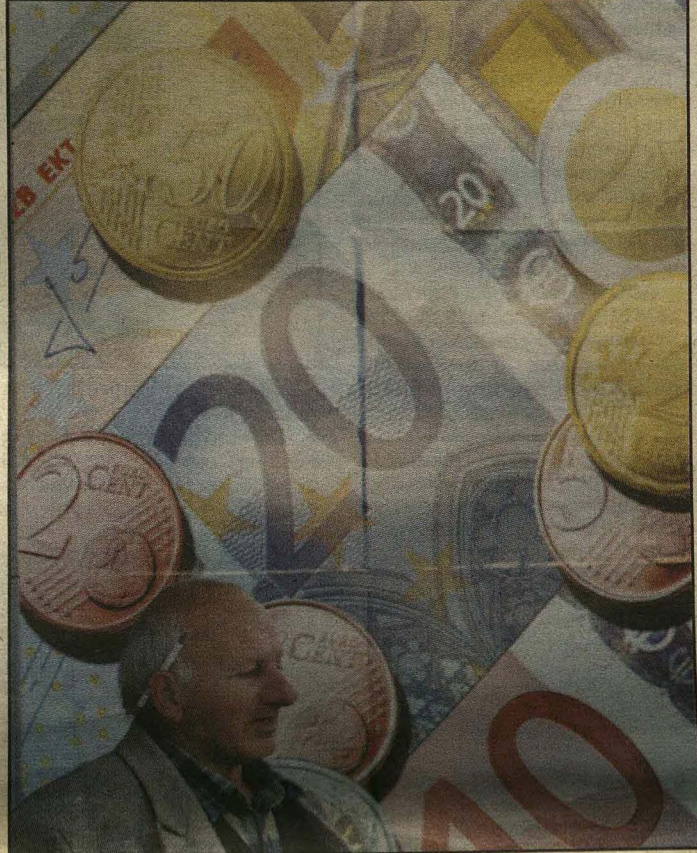
EURO MP Marios Matsakis yesterday made a surprise entry into the 2008 presidential race by announcing his candidacy much to the chagrin of his former Diko colleagues. The firebrand politician has ruffled feathers in his belated bid for the island's top job by announcing his decision, at a Nicosia news conference, to stand for President in the February 17 presidential elections. His decision was final, he said.

See page 5
CANDIDATE MATSAKIS: "I decided to stand for President for the good of Cyprus. I will work for a solution for a united island."
(Photo by FieldPress-Amvrosios Demou)

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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WELCOME EURO: A man passes in front of a banner showing the Eurozone money outside the Central Bank in Nicosia.

Bhutto buried, violence stalks Pakistan

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (Reuters)
BENAZIR Bhutto was laid to rest next to her father in the family mausoleum yesterday after the opposition leader's assassination plunged Pakistan into crisis and triggered violent protests.

The 54-year-old's death stoked fears a Jan. 8 election meant to return Pakistan to civilian rule could be put off amid a backlash threatening to engulf embattled President Pervez Musharraf. Pakistan said there were signs al Qaeda was responsible.

Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, wept as he accompanied her coffin, draped with the green, red and black tricolour of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, on the 7-km journey to the tomb in the dusty village of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh. He then prayed there with the couple's three children, son Bilawal, 19, and daughters Bakhtawar, 17, and Aseefa, 14.

Many mourners chanted slogans against Musharraf and the United States, which has long backed the former army general in the hope he can maintain stability in the nuclear-armed country racked by Islamist violence.

Tens of thousands of mourners wept and beat their heads as Bhutto, killed by a suicide attacker at an election rally on Thursday, was carried from her ancestral home in Sindh province, in the south of the country, to the domed mausoleum.

"We have intelligence intercepts indicating that al Qaeda leader Baitullah Mehsud is behind her assassination," an Interior Ministry spokesman said. Mehsud is one of Pakistan's most wanted militant leaders.

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"Shame on the killer Musharraf, shame on the killer US," mourners cried. Others wept in despair. "Bhutto was my sister and Bhutto was like my mother," cried farmer Imam Bakhsh. "With her death, the world has ended for us." Musharraf, who seized power in a military coup in 1999 but left the army last month to become a civilian President, has appealed for calm and blamed Islamist militants for the killing.



FURY: Protesters block a road next to trucks that were set on fire to condemn the assassination of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto during a demonstration in Karachi.

Welcome euro

CYPRIOTS scrambled to obtain euros yesterday as the Finance Ministry announced plans for a party on Monday night to bid farewell to the pound and usher in the European common currency.

Cyprus and Malta officially adopt the euro on Tuesday, becoming the 14th and 15th members of the euro area amid accolades for their successful entry into the heart of Europe.

One of the first to make a euro ATM withdrawal will be President Tasos Papadopoulos at a special event to be held at the Finance Ministry on Monday night.

Officials are promising a celebration with songs and dance, presents and a traditional Vassilopitta - appropriately "enriched" with a euro coin.

The party - from 11.00 pm to 1.00 am, is open to the public. Meanwhile, the Central Bank warned the public yesterday not to confuse two Turkish coins, that of 50 kuru and 1 pound, with the 1 and 2 euro coins respectively.

"The coins of the new Turkish lira of 50 kuru and 1 pound, have the same colours and the same size as those of the 1 and 2 euro respectively, even though their value is substantially smaller," it said.

"That's why the public is advised to be careful and to carefully check the change handed back, to ensure that these are not the Turkish coins," it added. For details on the advent of the euro see pages 2, 3 and 42.

Lucky winners

SOME of The Cyprus Weekly's readers will have a particularly great start to the New Year, being the winners of one of the fabulous prizes of our Christmas Competition.

The results are now ready and for full details on the lucky winners, see page 4.

We thank all our readers for participating and we look forward to organising another exciting competition in 2008.

Happy New Year!

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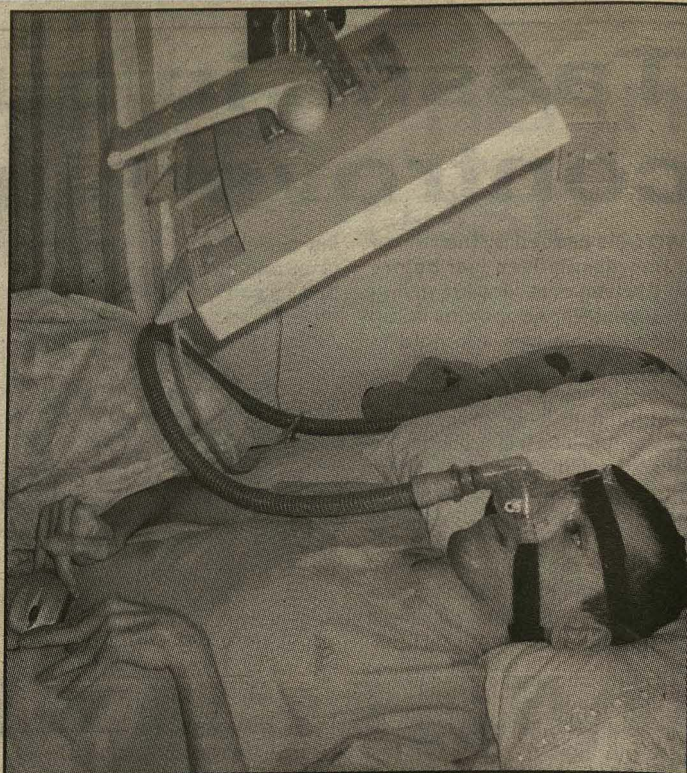
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AT WORK: Pissis working on a composition.

Disabled composer named person of the year

Pissis can move only one finger

THE Justice Ministry recently named a composer struck down with Muscular Dystrophy as Cyprus's 'Person of the Year' within the European Year of Equal Rights for All programmes.

Although his illness has confined Stelios Pissis to his bed for several years, he continues to write music using a specialised computer system. Pissis' illness means he is able to move only one finger. Pissis was chosen as Cyprus's Person of the Year in recognition of his strength of character in overcoming extreme difficulties and continuing to create.

He has previously won recognition for his compositions and contribution to culture. His works have been performed by the Kremlin Symphony Orchestra, the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra and others and been taken up by well-known performers Antonis Remos and Miltiades Paschalides amongst others.

In the forward for Pissis' most recent album 'Kastalias kai Seirion,' acclaimed Greek singer George Dalaras wrote: "God's grace, the joy of mankind and the composer's very soul are evident in Stelios' music."

All proceeds from the sale of Pissis' work go to charity.

The award for Person of the Year was given during an event held in Nicosia. Pissis' father, Klitos, accepted the accolade on his behalf.