

Greeks sit on early 250 million euros in old drachma: central bank

(ATHENS) - Greeks are still clinging onto nearly 250 million euros (393 million dollars) in old drachmas six years after the currency was phased out to be replaced by the euro, the Bank of Greece said on Tuesday. "People should start checking their mattresses," the Bank's head cashier Apostolis Kakavoutis told state television NET, noting that 85 billion drachmas, or 249.5 million euros, remain to be exchanged. Around 680 million drachmas have been redeemed since January and the option remains open until March 1, 2012, he added. First appearing in Asia Minor in the seventh century B.C. and said to be the world's oldest currency, the drachma was removed from use in February 2002 when Greece completed a transition to the euro.



A Marathon of Marriages on the Opening Day of the Olympics

The NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages will marry 96 couples in a marathon day of Olympic proportion.

"This special calendar event has caused a sensation here at the Registry," said Greg Curry, Registrar, NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages.

This Friday, 96 couples will say 'I do' at Registry offices in NSW. This is a record number of marriages in one day for the Registry. To meet the demand, the Registry has extended its opening hours; the first marriage will start at 8:00 am with the last marriage finishing after 8:00 pm.

"We have never experienced such a demand before, and we are delighted to assist so many couples. Getting married on significant or lucky days is popular here at the Registry. Many couples feel that getting married on the 8th day of the 8th month of 2008 will add something special," added Mr Curry.

In 1908, there were only 31 marriages on 8 August across NSW. This year the Registry expects to register more than 350 marriages from across the state.

In 2007, the Registry conducted over 3,300 marriages. The Registry continues to grow in popularity with couples for many different reasons, including affordability. Weddings at the Registry start from \$298.00.

To find out more about getting married at the Registry, call 1300 655 236 or visit www.bdm.nsw.gov.au



Gifted students need help too

By Bronwyn McNulty

GIFTED and talented students require as much consideration as struggling students if they are to achieve their potential, experts say.

Elly Paxinos, co-ordinator of gifted and talented students at Belmore's All Saint's Grammar School, said if these students were not challenged, boredom could result in them becoming "disengaged from the learning process"

"A lot of people think they are bright, don't need any assistance, they will get ahead anyway," Ms Paxinos said. "But they can easily lose interest, so it's sensible to cater to their needs".

At All Saints students are identified through a combination of parent and teacher nomination, standardised assessments, individual and group IQ tests and performance in national competitions.

The school occasionally took younger students from mixed ability classes to teach them at a greater pace. There was a mentoring program for those talented in particular areas and gifted and talented students were encouraged to independently research an area in which they were interested.

"Selective high schools can work for a majority of students but if a student goes from being top of the class to being in the fifth maths class, it can impact on how they feel about themselves," she said.

James Honor, principal of St George Christian School in Hurstville, said the school's general philosophy was that all children were unique and schools should "meet them at their point of need".

"You will have problems at either end if you don't do that," Mr Honor said. He said that, while it was important not to come to early conclusions about a child's capacity, it was equally important that children with special needs - be they learning support of gifted and talented - were identified.

Classical world is just divine

MICHAEL ALEXANDRATOS has sophisticated tastes for an 11 year old: recently he asked his teacher if he could study Dante Alighieri and his Divine Comedy.

It was something Michael stumbled across on the internet, and he liked the sound of it.

"I liked the characters and the themes, and I enjoy Dante's poetry a lot," the All Saint's Grammar School Year 6 student said.

"My main interests are in philosophy and ideas, and film."

As part of the enrichment program his school offers to gifted and talented students, Michael put together a chronological presentation on the history of film which he presented to fellow Year 6, as well as Year 10 students.

"It's a real bonus to get something extra," he said of the enrichment classes. "It's something beyond what we do in the normal classroom, something challenging."

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