

Cypriot ex-leader dies of cancer

The former Republic of Cyprus President Tassos Papadopoulos has died of lung cancer in hospital in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia. He was 74.

A veteran of Greek Cypriot politics, he became president in 2003 but lost a bid for a second term earlier this year when he lost in the first round.

Correspondents say he was regarded as a hardliner, notably rejecting a UN blueprint for reunification.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkey seized the north of the island.

The troops invaded after a coup in Nicosia engineered by the Greek government.

One of Mr Papadopoulos's achievements was to oversee Cyprus's entry into the European Union in 2004.

His successor as president, Dimitris Christofias, expressed his condolences.

"Tassos Papadopoulos will stay in history as one of the protagonists of our country's modern history," he said.



"A tight bond of friendship tied me with Tassos Papadopoulos. We worked together, fought battles together, we jointly struggled for the cause of Cyprus."

'Strength and dignity'

Mr Papadopoulos, a heavy smoker, died at 1305 (1105 GMT) on Friday, the head of Nicosia General Hospital's intensive care unit said.

"He confronted his disease with strength and dignity," Theodoros

Kyprianou added.

In guiding Greek Cypriots to reject the UN reunification plan for Cyprus, Mr Papadopoulos believed he had saved his country from Turkish domination, the BBC's Tabitha Morgan reports from Cyprus.

His supporters considered him a strong leader who championed Hellenism in Cyprus and resisted international pressure.

Critics accused him of being a hard-line nationalist who had passed over the best chance in a generation of reuniting the island.

Mr Papadopoulos trained as a barrister in London during the 1950s.

He later achieved prominence in the political wing of the EOKA, a right-wing paramilitary group which fought to end colonial rule in Cyprus and unite the country with Greece.

After independence in 1960, he became the youngest government minister at the age of 24.

He subsequently occupied several ministerial positions, before narrowly winning the presidential election in 2003.



Drug use begins at age 15

Greek drug users begin experimenting with illegal substances at an average age of 15.5, according to a study carried out by the Therapy Center for Dependent Individuals (KETHEA), a nongovernmental organization that runs a therapeutic community for addicts. The study found that the users are, on average, hooked on hard drugs by the age of 20, when they also start injecting. Most addicts turn to KETHEA for help when they are aged between 26 and 29. There are five men for every woman that seeks help to end their addiction. Seven in 10 of those seeking help have never worked for a living.

Sea Diamond

The company that insured the Sea Diamond cruise ship which sank off Santorini last year has until December 20 to come up with a plan to pump out the fuel left in the wreck, Merchant Marine Minister Anastassis Papaligouras said yesterday. He told officials on the island that the insurer will also have to cover the cost of the endeavor. Papaligouras added that the government would also pressure those responsible for the vessel to remove it from the sea, just off the Aegean island. However, islanders said that they would begin an indefinite sit-in protest at the local tax office on December 17 to push for the shipwreck to be towed away.

Prison release

The government plans to proceed with plans to release hundreds of prison inmates before Christmas as part of an early release scheme for those nearing the end of their sentences. The Associated Press cited Justice Ministry officials as saying yesterday. Reforms drafted by Justice Minister Sotiris Hatzigakis foresee the early release of some 5,500 inmates by April. Last month Hatzigakis said he would do his best to ensure that some 3,700 prison inmates entitled to early release would be home by Christmas.

'Oldest human brain' discovered

Archaeologists have found the remains of what could be Britain's oldest surviving human brain.

The team, excavating a York University site, discovered a skull containing a yellow substance which scans showed to be shrunken, but brain-shaped.

Brains consist of fatty tissue which microbes in the soil would absorb, so neurologists believe the find could be some kind of fossilised brain.

The skull was found in an area first farmed more than 2,000 years ago.

More tests will now be done to establish what it is actually made of.

The team from York Archaeological Trust had been commissioned by the university to carry out an exploratory dig at Heslington East, where campus extension

work is under way.

The skull was discovered in an area of extensive prehistoric farming landscape of fields, trackways and buildings dating back to at least 300 BC.

Preservation

The archaeologists believe the skull, which was found on its own in a muddy pit, may have been a ritual offering.

There is something unusual in the way the brain has been treated, or something that it's been exposed to that has preserved the shape of it

York Hospital neurologist

It was taken to the University of York where CT scans were used to look at the skull's contents.

Philip Duffey, the consultant neurologist who carried

out the scans, said the find was "amazing".

"It's exciting that scanning has shown structures which appear to be unequivocally of brain origin.

"I think that it will be very important to establish how these structures have survived, whether there are traces of biological material within them and, if not, what is their composition."

He added: "This could be the equivalent of a fossil. The brain itself would generally not survive. Fatty tissues would be feasted on by microbes.

"This isn't like the remains found in bogs; it doesn't have any skin on the skull or any tissue remains elsewhere.

"There is something unusual in the way the brain has been treated, or something that it's been exposed to that

has preserved the shape of it."

TB victim

Dr Sonia O'Connor, research fellow in archaeological sciences at the University of Bradford added: "The survival of brain remains where no other soft tissues are preserved is extremely rare.

"This brain is particularly exciting because it is very well preserved, even though it is the oldest recorded find of this type in the UK, and one of the earliest worldwide."

The find is the second major discovery during investigations at the site.

Earlier this year, a team from the university's department of archaeology unearthed a shallow grave containing the skeleton of a man believed to be one of Britain's earliest victims of tuberculosis.

Radiocarbon dating suggests that the man died in the fourth century, the late-Roman period.

The vice-chancellor of the University of York, Professor Brian Cantor, said: "The skull is another stunning discovery and its further study will provide us with incomparable insights into life in the Iron Age."

Specialists now hope to carry out further tests on the skull to establish how it has survived for so long, and perhaps more about the person whose brain it was.

Night club owner killed in ambush

Night club owner Babis Lazarides, 40, was killed late on Friday in an ambush. Gunmen, who had been waiting for him outside the hotel he had been living with his partner, singer Aggeliki Iliades, 31, and their child, opened fire at him. Lazarides dropped dead, while his partner was hurried to hospital with leg injuries. Police has put down the cold-blooded murder to personal issues, since Lazarides had repeatedly been involved in crime cases.

A year ago, he was accused of aiding and abetting the murder of his rival Giannis Voutyrakos, owner of Karamela night club. The shooter, a former war navy officer, was sent behind bars, while Lazarides was acquitted.

On 4 March 2008, a blast badly damaged Lazarides' night club Muses. He had told the police he had been threatened.